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# Intersemiotic Interpretation

The role of medium in intersemiotic  
translation of a poem

Thu Nguyen

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# Intersemiotic Interpretation

*The role of medium in intersemiotic translation of a poem*

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Master thesis in New Media Design and Production  
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**“intersemiotic** transposition — from one system of signs into another, e.g., from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting.” (Jakobson, 1959, p. 238)

# Abstract

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Intersemiotic translation is the process of translating a verbal source material into another, nonverbal medium. This approach extends the traditional definition of translation, providing another perspective beyond language. Intersemiotic research has frequently investigated the semiotic process of translating literature such as poetry to other media e.g. painting. However, I could not find any research of intersemiotic translation which explores the effect of the same poem translated to different semiotic channels. As the result of iterative experimentation, I created two translations of the German poem “Kleine Aster” by Gottfried Benn, one as an art installation using thermal printers to dissect the poem’s grammatical content, and the other as an infographic following the principles of Isotype. The artworks were evaluated by a questionnaire and thematic analysis revealed that the art installation conveyed the intention of the poem better while the information graphic communicated the content. Additionally, a comparison of the two produced translations as well as a musical work based on the same poem suggests that the choice of the medium is affected by the translator’s interpretation and skillset. Because of this, the translation process is dependent on these variables as they decide how and what should be conveyed in the target medium. This makes intersemiotic translation of a poem a subjective work, as the translator decides what are the important components of the poem that should be represented.

**Keywords:** *intersemiotic translation, intersemiotic process, semiotic channels, Gottfried Benn, poetry, art installation, Isotype, new media*



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# table of content

Abstract	7
Acknowledgements	8
Introduction	12
Research Methods	16
Background	20
Translation	22
Semiotics	24
Intersemiotic Translation	27
Medium	33
What is poetry?	34
The poem	36
Diving into the poem	46
Gothóni's musical translations	48
Translation 1: Bacterial Cellulose	56
Translation 2: To my beloved Aster	58
Translation 3: Isotype	76
Comparison	82
Discussion	88
Conclusion	92
List of References	94
List of Figures	96
List of Tables	97
Appendices	98
Appendix A: Original Interview in German with Gothóni	100
Appendix B: Poem's translations with marked word classes	105
Appendix C: Survey	108

# Introduction

Sharing poetry is frequently done by reading it aloud or by sharing the written text of the poem. However, when the recipient is not able to speak the original language of the work it is consequential to find a translation. Yet Jakobson (1959) argues that “...*poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible...*” (p. 238). Therefore, if we want to share a poem with someone who is not capable of understanding the language, it is necessary to find a transposition of the poem and in this case, two possible approaches can be considered: the transposition of the language into another (interlingual) or by transposing the poem into another shape (intersemiotic) which could be, for example, music or a painting (Jakobsen, 1959). Certainly, the common choice is to provide the poem as a translation from the original language into another language that the recipient can understand. Numerous translations of poetry from one language to another exist and intralingual translation has been widely researched. This body of knowledge provides various information and approaches of how to translate poetry for translators. However, when it comes to intersemiotic translation, it goes beyond the field of linguistics and becomes artistic, a predominantly interpretative activity. In my review of the existing literature, I could not encounter almost any research on the consequences of the choice of target medium when translated intersemiotically, instead the research in this field has focused on exploring the aspects of intersemiotic translations related to their processes or semiosis (e.g. Aguiar & Queiroz, 2013; Salehipour & Lotfi, 2016 and Pereira, 2008).

How can we guarantee as a “translator” to convey the same message of a poem when the transposition can carry any form? It is important to understand not only as a translator but also as artists what the choice of the target medium for a translation means to succeed to communicate the same qualities as in the original poem. Although there is some freedom of interpretation of a poem, the translation into another medium should not be based on the choice of the preferred medium of the “translator” or be based only on their skillset. Instead, I argue that the medium should be chosen based on the poem itself. Typically, when it comes to nonverbal translation, the choice of medium is depending on the skillset of the “translator”, such as a painter who wants to express the poem by a painting or an illustrator who is commissioned to illustrate a book. The author of a poem has made choices within the format

of poetry to communicate their intentions by using a specific rhyme pattern, type, figure of speech, etc. Therefore, as a translator, these aspects need to be considered when it comes to translation into another nonverbal sign system to ensure a successful translation.

The work presented here explores the role of the medium in intersemiotic translation by analysing the effect on the perception and interpretation of different types of translations of the same poem. As a basis for this exploration, the poem “Kleine Aster” by Gottfried Benn is selected as a case study. The examination of the translation and its process is considered as an artistic approach, in which the artist takes the role of a translator to create their own translations and reflects on them. This thesis is separated into two main chapters: the first one “Background” will investigate all the aspects which are needed to be able to translate the chosen poem into another medium, while the second part “Diving into the poem” will use these findings to create and analyse different translations on their effect and perception. Finally, the last chapter will summarise how different media can affect the translation.

## Personal Motivation behind the choice of the poem

During high school times, the poem “Kleine Aster” by Gottfried Benn was introduced to me as a typical example of the German literature’s period of Expressionism. Even though many poems were introduced and analysed during these times, this poem has always come back to my mind due to its morbid contents and way of poetry. It is one of the poems which breaks the standard of the general known aesthetics of German poetry by not following any rhythm, schema or, metrics and approaches a taboo topic - death - as causality. However, after reading this poem over the years again and again my first impression of indignation has changed, and I consider it one of the most aesthetic and beautifully written poems.

Sharing the poem’s translation to non-German-speakers seems to fail because of the confusion of the aesthetics. One aspect of this could be the time of exposure to this poem, since the content seems to be

distracting from seeing the poem in its whole and the poem typically requires several readings to understand its expression. On the other hand, a reason for this could be a loss in translation due to changes in the form and vocabulary. Especially, after investigating several English translations, none of them have been in my opinion adequate and cause the same emotions as the original; there is some loss in the translation.

As a result, the question came up of how to transfer the beauty of the poem, when it is not only based on words? In a small investigation of other representations of the poem, I found a video and illustrations of the poem. However, these representations do not seem sufficient, and the starting point for this thesis became to figure out how to translate a poem and what effect the choice of medium will have.

## Research Methods

### Research Questions

This thesis tries to examine what the role of the medium in intersemiotic translation and poetry is based on the current work by investigating and trying to answer the following questions:

- What aspects do I need to take into account when creating an intersemiotic translation based on a poem?
- How will the reader/viewer perceive different translations?
- What happens when I translate the same poem in different ways?

### Theoretical Research

The theoretical research serves to build expertise to be able to create own translations. Therefore, a literature review will be executed to understand what (intersemiotic) translation is and what must be considered while translating. Because the translation is based on the choice of the medium, an examination of what a medium is should be considered as well. In addition, to receive a better understanding of the poem, research about the poem's creation and the author is necessary to produce a translation.

### Interview

The Finnish pianist and composer Ralf Gothóni translated the poem "Kleine Aster" into a vocal music piece. To find more about the decisions Gothóni has made for his translation an interview with him is conducted. The insights should enable a better understanding of the role and processes of a translator. Gothóni's translation is explored to see the transformation from text to music.

### Poetry Analysis

Because this thesis is using the poem "Kleine Aster" as case study, a poetry analysis should provide conclusions for a deeper understanding of the work by examining the form, sound, and language to determine the effects they cause and be able to offer a comprehensible interpretation.

### Qualitative Research

To see the different outcomes of the different translations, a questionnaire will investigate what the impressions of the artworks are to see if the work can communicate the initial ideas and interpretation of the translation. Based on the result of the survey the methodology of "Using thematic analysis in psychology" by Braun & Clarke (2006) is applied to analyse the outcome.

## Artistic Research

According to Klein (2010) artistic research can be distinguished as research, "*which is based on (other) research, then, in art, for which research (or research methods) are used for, and finally in art, whose product are research*" (p.2). Because of those different existing perspectives towards artistic research, it must be defined to what extent this thesis is artistic research and what kind of artistic methodologies will be applied. Based on Klein's (2010) definition this thesis can be defined as an artistic research "whose product are research". In this thesis two possible translations are created as art productions; however, these artworks are based on the gained knowledge and their outcome are investigated to create a conclusion. Hence, it can be said that "*the required research is neither a preliminary work phase of art production nor is it a means to an end, rather it is the aim of the work itself. This is not about research to pro-*

duce an artwork; the work is the research” (Busch, 2009, p.3).

### Artistic Experience

A methodology of the research which makes the research artistic is the artistic experience. On the one hand, it describes the process and methods for creating an artistic piece. These are, for example, drafts, modelling, recording, inspiration, evaluating which leads to a discussion and reflection towards the artwork. On the other hand, it describes the perspective the researcher is taking: Hannula (2014) points out that *“being engaged in an artistic process means moving back and forth between periods of intensive (insider) engagement and more reflective (outsider) distance-taking”* (p.16). Consequently, the researcher is taking a different position in his perspective to reflect. This experience can occur in different periods and lengths with different importance during the whole research (Klein 2010).

This artistic experience can be seen in the described artworks. All these artistic experiments have been created and iterated based on the viewpoints of insider and outsider which occur at different times during the research.



# Background

In this chapter, the foundation for the work will be built. It will be investigated what the process of translation is and what intersemiotic translation means. Additionally, it will be defined what medium in the context of this work is, and the characteristics of poetry will be shortly discussed, as this work uses a poem as the basis. The translation and the medium should be understood as the results of choices made based on the insights in this chapter.

# Translation

To translate a poem into another medium, it is paramount to understand the exact meaning and processes of translation. Therefore, any translator needs knowledge of the theoretical fundamentals of their work. The aim of this section is to determine which aspects of a poem are possible to translate from a verbal medium and which compromises must be made depending on the target medium.

It is a widely held view that translation is a process of echoing words from one language into another, which requires the knowledge of at least two languages. In this process, the aim is to reproduce the words from one language into another, to be able to communicate our message more widely, while retaining their meaning and relationship as accurately as possible. Thus, translation is defined by Catford (1965, p. 20) as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) [the source language] by equivalent textual material in another language (TL) [the target language]”.

Catford’s (1965) definition requires that the target language has equivalent textual material to the source language – that the same word, thought, or expression can be expressed in both languages in the exact same way, without losing or adding new meaning. However, this is seldom possible due to inconsistencies in languages: for a given word, which is commonly used in the source language, there might not exist a word with an identical meaning in the target language (Savory, 1968, p.18). Additionally, another problem is that the equivalent word can only mean the same when the word shows the same meaning without its grammatical structure and this is almost impossible due to differences between different language grammars (Nibbrig, 2001, p.7). Indeed, translation is more the creation of a faithful relationship (*Treueverhältnis*) between the source and the target and any attempt of translation from the target text is an effort to reach the closest possible relationship to the source text.

However, the faithful relationship cannot only be compared by the equivalent grammar or words when these are not existing in the target language. Therefore, an additional way must be added to quantify

the similarity between the source and target text. One way to scale the faithful relationship is to identify the meaning when reproducing the same message from the source language to the target language. By considering the meaning of the content of the translation as well, the aim of translation can be defined as “a text that expresses what another text has expressed in another language” (Schjoldager, Gottlieb, & Klitgård, 2008, p 19.).

Expressing the same message from one language into another language does not necessarily require the equivalent word or the same grammatical structure. However, it requires that the target language contains the equivalent semantics of the message. If the semantics do not exist in the target language, the translation can be misleading or wrong. A simple example can be seen in idioms, for instance, the German idiom “*Passt wie die Faust auf’s Auge*” lacks the same semantics in English when it is translated with the same equivalent words and similar grammatical structure, which would lead to the following phrase: “*Fits like the fist on the eye*”. In contrast, the equivalent Finnish translation “*sopii kuin nyrkki silmään*” shows a strong faithfulness to the source texts grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, Germans and Finns could understand each other in their translation through their similar words and grammar. In contrast, an Englishman would become confused and misunderstand the literal translation, unless he understands the semantics as well or could connect it with the English idiom with the same meaning: “*Fits like a glove*”. Therefore, it follows that translation is more concerned with equivalent thoughts and thereby goes beyond mere utterances. In other words, translation is not only about finding the same expression but about finding the same thought behind the expression. However, to achieve equivalent thoughts with the same expression it would be required that everyone would have the same way of expressing their thought so that the understanding of the message remains identical (Savory 1968, p.13).

Moreover, idioms themselves are a complex and important topic in translation theory and could be discussed even further than just this one example. Nonetheless, the given example shows that a faithful relationship between the original and target is achieved by reproducing the closest equivalent meaning of the source and this is not based on the equivalent words or grammar but instead in the way of expression.



As a result, the translator must be sure to understand the intention of the words and the sentences in the original context when translating.

Additionally, another typical problem is that even though occasionally translations are created during the same time as the source text, very often the target text is produced after the source text's original time of creation. Because of this, translators face the problem of being unsure what the creator of the source text wanted to express (Eco, 2002, p.9) as they are not able to ask the original author. This should be understood and considered by translators themselves before translating. Therefore, a certain amount of background research needs to be conducted before translating, instead of simply reproducing the text according to its grammar. Like in art criticism, a baroque painting shows an intention that can only be understood when considering the circumstances of the time of the painting's creation. A specific period with historical events, as well as artistic, political, and societal aspects influenced the artwork. This is also valid for any source text and these aspects should be taken into account by the translators in their translation (Walter, 1957, p.11). If the translators have the same semantic understanding in words as well as the knowledge of the circumstances in which the text has been produced (such as political, historical, etc.) they will be able to create the closest translation towards the original.

To conclude, the primary function of translating is to reproduce the meaning of the original text in the target language. This means understanding the intentions of the original text and understanding the influences and circumstances of the author. For example, slang words or satire texts can only be grasped through the impact of the environment. Finally, a translation should be as faithful as possible towards the original source to be able to reproduce the equivalent meaning.

## Semiotics

Although the translation process has been discussed in the previous section, I have encountered almost no literature or research regarding translation to different media. The vast majority of linguistics material concerns translation from one language to another, for instance, from one written language to another or from one verbal language to another,

etc. However, to translate a poem into another medium implies that the translation has a nonverbal target as well. To be able to translate a verbal text nonverbally a look into semiotics is a principal aspect. Jakobson (1959) defined three different kinds of translation:

1. *Intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.*
2. *Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.*
3. *Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (p.233)*

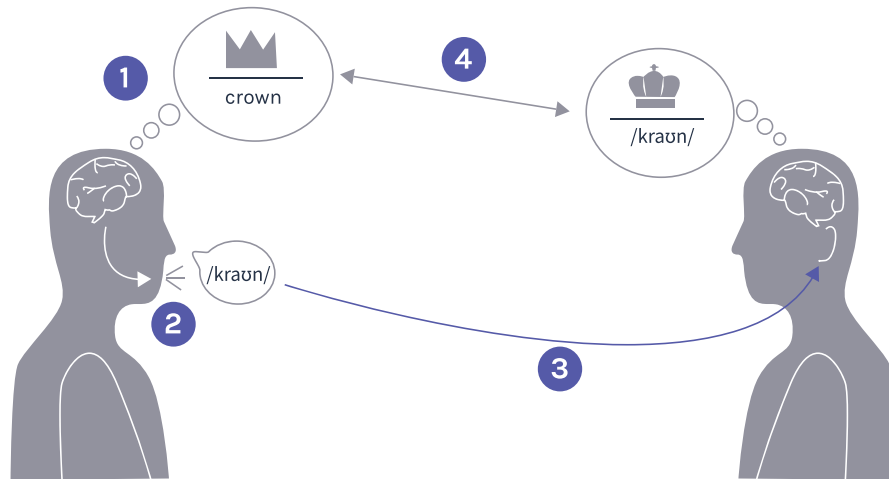
To achieve our aim of translation to a nonverbal medium, a deeper understanding of intersemiotic translation or transmutation is necessary. Therefore, this part will investigate translation within the context of semiotics by exploring what semiotics is on the surface level and what must be considered in intersemiotic translation by the perspective of the translator.

### Basics of Semiotics

Semiotics can be defined as the study of signs in any form and it investigates their behaviour, process, and meaning. Two of the greatest influences of modern semiotics are brought by two contemporaries: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Pierce (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Saussure's (1966/2006) theory defines language as a system that can be distinguished between *langue*, the system of signs and *parole*, the act of utterance. *Langue* cannot exist without *parole* and vice versa. Without the sign system (*langue*) no communication is possible since utterance (*parole*), is not possible. And without the utterance the sign system cannot be studied (Saussure, 1966/2006).

According to Saussure (1966/2006) a linguistic sign is based on the *signifier* (phonetic picture) and the *signified* (concept). For example, in communication, when the sender expresses the word "crown" (signifier), a concept exists in the sender's mind (signified), which is connected to the word. The same concept is recalled by the receiver when he hears the word "crown" (See Figure 1). Additionally, according to this theory, linguistic signs have also these attributes:

- Arbitrariness: There is no natural relationship between the sound sequence and the concept.
- Conventionality: The connection between the signifier and signified must be retained to be able to communicate.
- Linear character: The signified receives its meaning in the context.
- Immutability: the relationship between signified and signifier cannot be changed or replaced. (Saussure, 1966/2006)



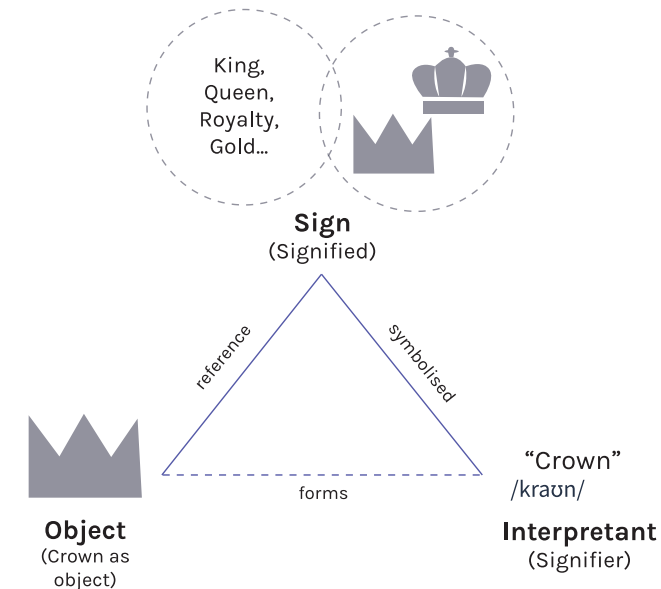
**Figure 1:** Process of Communicating based on Saussure (1966/2006). 1. The sender has a sign in mind signified (concept of a crown) and signifier (phonetic picture for crown); 2. The organ of speech pronounce the word for “crown”; 3. The receiver hears the word and in his mind connects it with his concept of crown. 4. Because of langue/parole a communication of sign is possible.

While Saussure’s theory is fundamental for today’s semiotic studies, it is limited to language, whereas Pierce’s (as cited in Manghani et al., 2006) semiotic theory of signs goes beyond the context of linguistics and gives the possibility to apply signs to anything that creates meaning, which could be for instance gestures or colours. Furthermore, Pierce enhances the concept of signs by categorising them in the following way:

- an *icon* is a sign which has a similarity to what it represents, such as a statue.

- an *index* is a sign which is related to what it represents, such as smoke representing fire.
- A *symbol* is a conventional sign which needs to be learned and has no relationship to what the sign represents, e.g. the symbol for genders “♀”. (Pierce as cited in Manghani et al., 2006)

Pierce (as cited in Hartshorne, 1931) identifies that semiosis (the process of signs) is in a triadic relation between the interpretant, object and sign (See Figure 2). The sign defines anything that creates the idea of something (similar to Saussure’s signifier). This sign in turn is the reference to the object. The idea or concept which it leads to is then called interpretant (about equal to Saussure’s definition of signified).



**Figure 2:** Semiosis based on Pierce (as cited in Hartshorne, 1931).

## Intersemiotic Translation

Based on Jakobson’s (1959) definition, any source text can be translated into a nonverbal form by the aspects of the semiotics, in other words, a text can be translated to any sign which can communicate the poem’s meaning. Therefore, nonverbal translation is a semiotic process. According to Gottlieb (2008) translation in terms of semiotics can be separated into two categories: intrasemiotic and intersemiotic; intra-

semiotic implies that the translation occurs inside one sign system while intersemiotic happen to another sign system. With the semiotic approach we can expand the concept of translation beyond ‘languages’: for example instead of talking about translating from one language into another or rephrasing the text, any sign system can be considered to be translated e.g. an intersemiotic translation could be a song cover from pop to metal by using the sign system of music. On the other hand, intersemiotic translation is happening from one sign system into another, which means it can take any possible shape of another sign system, such as from text to painting. Because the number of semiotic channels in different sign system can vary in intersemiotic translation, these translations can be categorised into *diasemiotic* (another channel than original source), *supersemiotic* (more channels than in the original) and *hyposemiotic* (less channels than in the original) (Gottlieb, 2008).

Gottlieb (2008) also categorizes intersemiotic translation between ‘conventionalized’ and ‘adaptational’ translation which defines the degrees of freedom in the translation. With conventionalized translation there is limited freedom: if the target product would be compared with the source, the target product would be very rigorous regarding the faithfulness to the source, which means that it can also be transparent for the viewer to follow the translation process, e.g. a translation from a text which is based on Latin alphabet into Morse code or translating “no smoking” into a pictogram. The viewer can reconstruct the meaning of the original source and the translation is strict towards the original text. Meanwhile, adaptational translation can have an unlimited scope for interpretation that the translator can choose from, giving more freedom in the adaptational translation compared to conventionalized translation (Gottlieb, 2008). This means that the adaptational translation is indeed based on the original, but this is not as transparent as in the conventionalized approach. Therefore, a translation of a photo to music gives the translator space of freedom to translate it (See See Table 1 for an overview of Gottlieb’s categorisation of intersemiotic translation). Moreover, the “translator has the freedom of choosing and defining the target ‘language’, i.e. by choosing the material, the genre, and technique that is best suited to the task” (Campbell & Vidal, 2019).

One problem in intersemiotic translation, which leads to this freedom, is that an equivalent sign does not exist in a target sign system

		Target Text Semiotics		
		Diasemiotic (Different Channels than original)	Supersemiotic (more channels than original)	Hyposemiotic (fewer channels than original)
Adapational Translation	Nonverbal (Nonverbal ST > nonverbal TT)	1. Music based on photo	2. Animation film based on music	3. Sketch of bee dance
	Deverbalizing (Verbal ST > nonverbal TT)	4. Poem into painting	5. Screen adaption of novel	6. Play turned mime
	Verbalizing (Nonverbal ST > verbal TT)	7. Ball game on radio	8. Ball game on TV	9. Audio description on DVD
Conventionalized Translation	Nonverbal (Nonverbal ST > nonverbal TT)	10. Written music	11. Statistical pie charts	12. Notation of ballet
	Deverbalizing (Verbal ST > nonverbal TT)	13. Pictograms	14. Acted stage directions	15. Manual in braille
	Verbalizing (Nonverbal ST > verbal TT)	16. Morse code decryption	17. Interpreted sign language user	18. Charts mediated to the blind

Table 1: Intersemiotic Types of Translation Note. Reprinted from “Understanding Translation”, by Gottlieb, H., 2008, p. 43, Aarhus: Academica.

per se. This view is supported by Umberto Eco, who stated that “the form of the linguistic expression cannot be mapped one to one onto another continuum.” (as cited in Dusi, 2015, p.185). This case can be seen for example, when we are trying to translate the idiom “fits like a glove” which is based on the English sign system into the sign system of music. There is no equivalent musical expression for the words “fit”, “like”, “a” and “glove”, or an expression to transpose the meaning to a musical sequence. Therefore, “the translator must choose among the aspect considered interpretatively more relevant” (Queiroz & Aguiar, 2015, p. 202). Depending on the interpretation, the translator can decide how to translate this idiom. This could be for instance, by creating a musical alphabet and playing the words based on it, by playing the rhythm of the idiom, or by creating a music piece that expresses meaning through interpretation. This implies that the equivalent signs are based on the decisions of the translator and the translation is not based on the equivalent signs but instead, it is about the similarity to the original (Dusi, 2015).

If intersemiotic translation is based on freedom of interpretation, to what extent is it still a translation? Eco (as cited in Dusi, 2015, p. 184) has concluded that intersemiotic translation is an adaptation:

*“intersemiotic translation cannot be anything other than adaptation, because it transforms, often radically, the previous text, inevitably explicating the unsaid, showing something in image form and therefore establishing a point of view precisely where the novel maintains a greater degree of undecidability.”*

Based on the example of translating an idiom into another medium, it can be seen that due to non-equivalent signs, the translation needs to be adapted based on the translator’s interpretation and the “reader” of the translation cannot see, as in a conventionalized translation, the decision behind the interpretation without any further information. On the other hand, intersemiotic translation can reveal by their various aspects what the original cannot show, for example, a dance performance can be better interpreted than a written description of a dance.

Especially when the translation is seen as a relation within a multi-level system, for instance, in poetry the level of rhythm is connected with words, and these words are connected to the layer of phonology,

etc., in intralingual translation, a mapping can be made with a similar relationship by creating the same patterns in the translation, whereas in intersemiotic translation the signs need to be mapped into another semiotic level such as light for rhythm (Queiroz & Aguiar, 2015). This means that translation implies that the elements or levels in the semiotics must be recreated to the target source by adaptation. When it comes to intersemiotic translation of poetry, each level of poetry must be taken into account and recreated or rather adapted depending on the choices made by the translator.

The previous conclusion that a translator has to be as faithful as possible to the original text regarding intersemiotic translation can only be measured and explained by the translators themselves who are deciding the parameters of the faithfulness in the chosen target sign system. Hence, the translation is depending on the interpretation as the translators must choose parts from a poem such as a rhythm, content, intention, etc. which are by their perspective crucial to “translate” and need to adapt or transmit these into the chosen target medium to represent each level of the original text. The translation has a great range of artistic freedom as the interpretation allows the usage of any tool and any number of semiotic channels.

As the translation is based on semiotics, we must consider the semiosis as well. Considering Peirce’s (as cited in Hartshorne, 1931) model (See Figure 2) the semiosis must be adapted to consider how the intersemiotic translation and the poem are in relation to each other. Queiroz & Aguiar (2015) suggest that intersemiotic translation is an iconic process (a sign meant to resemble something based on the physical characteristics, e.g. buzzing to represent a bee) as the translation tries to resemble the different levels of the poem into the other sign system, such as the rhythm of a text to the rhythm of a dance. To be able to identify the relationship between the possible translation and the poem, Queiroz & Aguiar (2015) have defined two possible intersemiotic models towards the process of semiotics. One semiosis describes that the object represents the poem’s meaning, this could be based on interpretation of the translator, for example, nihilism or the work of a pathologist. The object is defined by the sign which is the content/text of the poem itself whose ideas are represented by the translated work (See Figure 3). The other model describes a semiosis where the

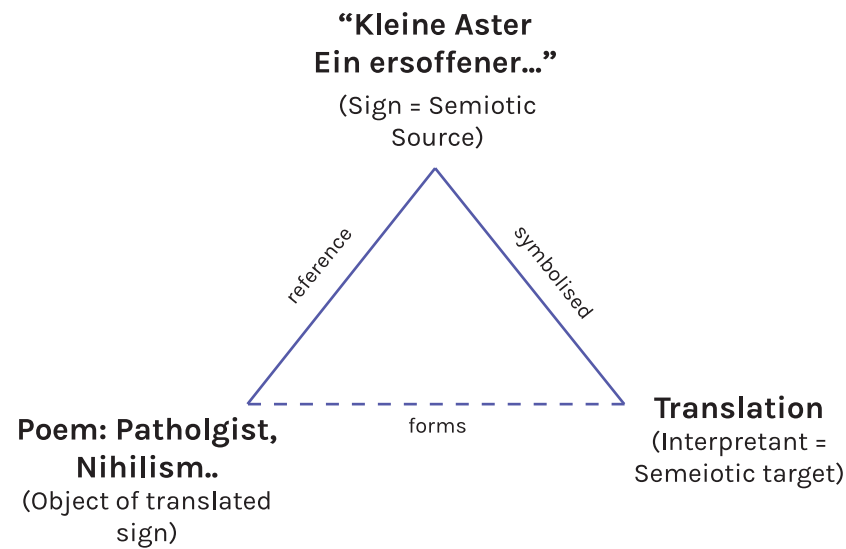


Figure 3: First model of the semiosis based on the poem

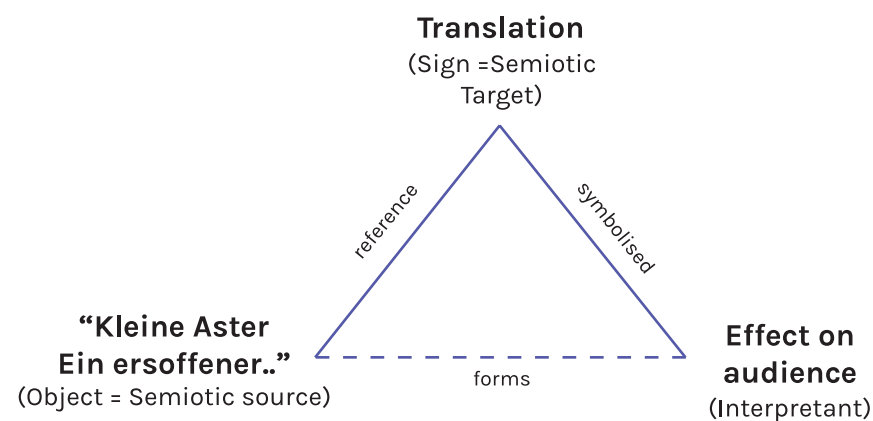


Figure 4: Second model of the semiosis based on the poem

poem's content is the object which determines the artwork (the sign) and the effect of the viewer is the interpretant (See Figure 4). Based on these two models, in the first model the poem's object is depicted by the artwork/translation/medium while in the other model the viewer is experiencing the meaning of the poem as mediated by the artwork (Queiroz & Aguiar, 2015).

## Medium

Because this thesis tries to investigate the role of the medium a short understanding of medium is necessary to form the author's perspective towards intersemiotic translation. Based on the definition of semiotics, a sign is anything that can communicate meaning. Therefore, a medium in this context of intersemiotic translation is anything which can transmit the meaning. Nonetheless, it should be explored what the choice of the medium can change within the context of communication. The medium serves the translation as a communication tool.

Harry Pross (as cited in Bohnenkamp & Schneider, 2006) stated that media can be classified into three types. Primary media is media which can be used to communicate without any further technical support or device, hence primary media are for example voice, gesture, and miming. The secondary media type describes any medium which requires some device or support by the sender but not by the recipient e.g. smoke signals. Tertiary media requires technical devices on both the side of the sender and the recipient, for instance, e-mails (Pross as cited in Bohnenkamp & Schneider, 2006). Of these three types of media, this thesis will mainly focus on the second type, created with the help of tools by the artist (sender) and the recipient will be able to consume the media product with their bare senses.

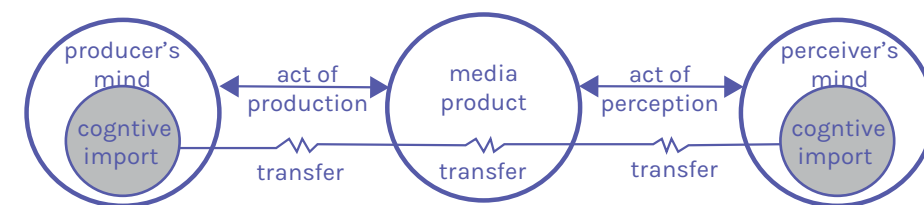


Figure 5: A medium-centered model of communication. Note. Reprinted from "A medium-centered model of communication", by Elleström, L., 2018, *Semiotica*, 2018(224), p. 282. Copyright Elleström 2020.

The communication between the sender and receiver can be further explained by Elleströms' (2016) model of medium-centered communication (See Figure 5). Elleström (2016) describes this model with



three entities: the mind (of the producer and perceiver), the transfer of the cognitive import (the meaning produced in a cognitive process), and the media product which makes the cognitive import feasible. Based on the model, the producer creates a media product that will be grasped by the perceiver from sensorial inputs. The cognitive import which is processed in the producer's mind is transferred with the help of the media product which will be interpreted by the perceiver into their cognitive import (Elleström, 2016). An example is for instance a phone call: the producer is interacting with a phone to call the perceiver (the act of production), the call is the media product and this call will be heard by the perceiver by the sense of hearing (the act of perception). The cognitive import is then interpreted from the speech the producer is generating, leading not only to a description of the interaction of speech but also the processes which involve creating the meaning. This meaning is directly transferred to the perceiver with the help of the media product. This means that it is a transfer of thoughts between the producers' or perceivers' mind and the media product serves as an intermediate space

To sum up the role of the medium I will explore how the created media product will change the act of the perception of the perceiver towards the cognitive import by the producer. This generated media product by the artist (producer) will be a secondary type of medium and is not restricted in the number of channels of sensory perception which means the focus is not only on visual or haptic but could include both as well as other sensorial inputs. The product can be anything that can communicate the meaning. The thesis will explore the act of perception and the possible changes in the cognitive import that the medium can produce.

## What is poetry?

The author of the poem could have chosen any other literary format such as a novel or a play to express what he wanted to share. However, he has chosen consciously a poem to convey a story. Based on this decision, characteristics of poetry should be understood to respect the author's decision, to be able to include the important characteristic of the poem in the target medium it will be translated to.

Poems or poetry belong to literature and this describes imaginative works that are using specific language to achieve certain aesthetics. Goethe defines literature into the categories: lyric, epic, and drama (as cited in Jeßing & Köhnen, 2017, p. 133). According to this categorisation, poems belong to lyric as they have the following characteristics (Jeßing & Köhnen 2017):

- Poetry expresses its content very concisely and precisely.
- The usage of verse and line breaks.
- Structural usage of rhythm mostly due to their structure of phonetics, syntax, or morphology.
- It is common to use rhyme.
- Poetry can express emotions and experiences of the author; however, the lyrical subject cannot be always seen equal with the real author but rather as a role.
- Imagery creation based on the usage of rhetorical stylistic devices.

Most of the characteristics of a poem can be found in the chosen poem and will be discussed deeper in the next section. Based on this we can find the reason for the choice of the poem and why prose text may not have been as suitable as poetry to express the author's ideas and thoughts.

## The poem

The chosen poem belongs to a collection of five poems which is called “Morgue” written by Gottfried Benn. “Kleine Aster” is the first poem of this collection. The collection has been published in March 1912 with 500 copies. To get an idea of the poem it is shown here fully in the original German language and in a translated English version. The poem analysis will refer to the original version.

### “Kleine Aster

- 1 *Ein ersoffener Bierfahrer wurde auf den Tisch gestemmt.  
Irgendeiner hatte ihm eine dunkelhellila Aster  
zwischen die Zähne geklemmt.  
Als ich von der Brust aus*
- 5 *unter der Haut  
mit einem langen Messer  
Zunge und Gaumen herausschnitt,  
muß ich sie angestoßen haben, denn sie glitt  
in das nebenliegende Gehirn.*
- 10 *Ich packte sie ihm in die Brusthöhle  
zwischen die Holzwolle,  
als man zunähte.  
Trink dich satt in deiner Vase!  
Ruhe sanft,*
- 15 *kleine Aster!” (Benn, 1912, p.12)*

### “Little Aster

- 1 *A drowned beer-hauler was heaved onto the slab.  
Someone had wedged a lavender aster  
between his teeth.  
As I reached through the chest*
- 5 *under the skin  
with a long knife  
to cut out the tongue and palate  
I must have bumped the flower, for it slid  
into the brain lying alongside.*
- 10 *I packed it into the chest cavity  
with the sawdust  
as we sewed up.  
Drink your fill in that vase!  
Rest in peace,*
- 15 *little aster!” (Supervert, 2020)*

## Poem Analysis

### Content

Kleine Aster tells a story of a drowned beer-carriage driver whose corpse gets prepared. The driver has an aster flower between his teeth but while the lyrical subject prepares the corpse, he notices that the flower is not anymore in the same position, instead, it lies in another brain next to it. So, he places it back in the corpse's chest before he closes it and wishes the flower to drink and rest well.

### Form analysis

The poem is written in one verse with fifteen lines. It consists of four sentences and each of them has a different length. Certainly, the sentences are more readable as prose text than reminding of "typical" structural poems with stanzas. In fact, there is not a common structure visible, instead, the lines have visible line breaks. The first line is the longest, which consists of a complete sentence of eight words while the last two lines are only consisting of two words each. There is no common rhythm and only two rhymes: between the first and third lines (*gestemmt* and *geklemmt*) as well as between the seventh and eighth lines (*herausschnitt* and *glitt*). However, there is no rhyme schema. The last two sentences are ending with exclamation marks.

### Interpretation

The title of the poem "Kleine Aster" refers to a flower that generates the expectation for the reader to read something romantic, gentle, and beautiful. The aster is a flower that looks similar to a daisy, exists in different shades of red and lilac, and blooms from the end of summer through autumn (Hammerschmidt, 2020). However, the expectations from the title are immediately destroyed with the first sentence: the flower is stuck between the teeth of the corpse. There are not many details of the person except he was a "*Bierfahrer*", someone who drives a carriage of beer and that this person has been "*ersoffen*", a slang word for "drowned". Especially the verb "*ersoffen*" (infinitive of the verb of "*ersoffen*" is "*ersaufen*") gives a connection with the word "*saufen*" which means to booze. Based on this it can be interpreted that the driver has been drunk and died because of this, and the lyrical persona does not show any empathy to him. Despite this, the focus is then set to the flower by the paradox word "*dunkelhellila*" (darklight lilac). Addi-

tionally, it shows the contrast between the corpse and the flower by the rhyme "*gestemmt*" (heaved) and "*geklemmt*" (wedged) in lines 1 and 3: the corpse is heaved roughly onto the table while the flower has been placed gently between the teeth. It can be said that the corpse loses its individuality, its humanity, and personality, and becomes nothing but an empty vessel. This is emphasized by the usage of passive voice in the first two lines. It demonstrates the irrelevance of the human being and his cause of death as well as apathy towards it.

In the next lines, the lyrical persona begins to describe his procedure of taking the corpse apart. The line breaks give impressions of coldness and there are no rhetorical devices used. The prepared human is reduced down to his body parts "*Zunge*" (tongue) and "*Gaumen*" (palate) in lines 6 and 7. This shows that the person is dehumanised. On the other side, the lyrical persona describes with precision what he is doing. Thus, it can be claimed that the persona does this procedure regularly as a doctor, pathologist, or undertaker. His perception of his actions appears cold, emotionless, and mundane.

His attention is towards the aster and it seems like he treats it as a person, because the "I" talks directly to the flower: "*Trinke dich satt in deiner Vase!*" (Fill up in your vase, line 13). Certainly, the body represents now metaphorically a vase and the flower should obtain its nutrition from it to stay alive. However, since the Aster is sewed into the chest cavity, it is obvious that the flower will die as well. The Aster is the key topic in this poem and the lyrical persona seems to become excited towards it, instead of the person who is the corpse. Even though the contrast between the dead corpse and the living flower is shown, the flower will end up the same as the corpse. The readers with a positive expectation get ridiculed by the poem since the reader identifies himself as a human being and the dead person, but the attention and respect are shown to a flower. It shows the sad truth which takes place after death: nothing is left in the end.

The choice of medium can be explained by sharing the neutral and protocol sounding process of the lyrical subject who is already used to it and this is caused by the simple language as well as the line breaks. Other literature, such as prose, could not offer this option, which might have lead to the choice of the original medium of poetry.



## The reaction to the poems

According to Holthausen (1986), the poem series “Morgue” which “Kleine Aster” belonged to was a scandal since it deals with a taboo topic of its time. Because of this most of the poetry reviews which were published reacted with disgust and unintelligibility towards these aesthetics such as this:

*“Wer sie aber lesen will, diese ... Gedichte, der stelle sich einen sehr steifen Grog zurecht — Einen sehr steifen!!!” (as cited in Benn, Raabe & Niedermayer, (1966), p. 109)*

*“Who wants to read these ... poems should prepare a very strong grog — a very strong one!!!”*

Wallmann (1965) argues that this indignation was not caused by the grotesque choice of topic, as other authors had already dealt with this theme, such as Rilke who published in 1907 the poem “Morgue”. Instead, the way it was written was the cause: the perspective and language Benn used was one of the doctors and this was not existing in German poetry yet. His poetry style used a language which reduces the human only to the corpse. Even though the way of speaking was common between medics, it was not common for the ordinary people. Quite to the contrary, Benn revealed with his expression of impiety the dark sides of death, which no one wanted to know during this time of progress and optimism, because of this it caused outrage towards Benn’s poetry (Wallmann, 1965). As Uhlig (1961) described, the poetry is mocking the dead, therefore it is an indirect mock towards the reader as well; however, within the negative reviews also positive reviews can be found such as by other poets as Ernst Stadler and Else-Lasker-Schüler who gave compliments to Benn’s poetry. Both reviewers became later known as expressionist poets. Moreover, as a result of this work, Benn became acquainted with people of the avantgarde scene of Berlin as well as publishers (Wallmann, 1965).

## Influences

As discussed in the previous chapter, to create a successful translation it is important to understand the significant contemporary occurrences which influenced the chosen poetry, to achieve a better awareness

of the intention of the work. Thus, this chapter will examine the biography of the author Gottfried Benn and the possible aspects impacting the creation of the poem. Although Benn had major influences in the German literature for decades this section is just investigating the period until the creation of the poem so only until the year 1912.

### About the author

This section is a summary of Benn’s life based on the books about him by Wallmann (1965), Uhlig (1961), and Holthausen (1986).

Benn was born on the 2nd of May 1886 in a clergy house in Mansfeld in Pultitz, a village that is about 150 km far away from Berlin. He was the second child of eight, his father was a Lutheran pastor and his mother was Swiss-French. In the same year of his birth, he and his family moved to further East to Sellin at Neumark (nowadays belonging to Poland). In the village Sellin, he grew up with an environment of nature, a place he called home still later in life. Benn attended the humanistic secondary school in Frankfurt an der Oder and graduated in 1905. At the request of his father, he started to study theology and philosophy in Marburg and in Berlin. He finally pursued his desire and started to study medicine at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Akademie, a military school. This made him also independent from his father, since the studies entailed no financial costs, instead service as a military doctor after graduation was required. Even though Benn was a medical student, he could already collect experiences as a doctor by assisting in the infantry. In 1911 he helped in the psychological department in the Charité and published several essays. Between this time Benn started to engage in literary pursuits with some publications in magazines. In February 1912 Benn received his doctor’s degree and started his service as a military doctor. A month later he published his work “*Morgue und andere Gedichte*” (Morgue and other poems) which was printed 500 times.

### Expressionism

The literature era of German expressionism is defined around 1910 — 1920 and belongs to modern German literature (Beutin et al. 2019). Expressionism was a subculture and like other artistic movements such as Impressionism and Romanticism, Expressionism was a reaction against Naturalism, a culture that focuses on details and pro-

gress. The mostly young artists felt lost in the insincere society and they expressed their art by letting the inner experience out (Anz, 2010). Based on the year of creation of Benn's collection "Morgue", the poem "Kleine Aster" can be categorized into the era of Expressionism. The characteristics of this era can be explained by the influences of history and society which will be described in this section.

As stated by Mai (2009) the creation time of the poem were the times of a palpable sense of an upcoming war: the German Empire focused to position themselves in the world politics by colonialism and to accomplish these aims established a large naval fleet, which led to a naval arms race between the British and German Empires and this, in turn, forced the major nations of the world to create alliances, such as Britain with France (Mai, 2009). In the works of many artists and writers of this time exists an enthusiasm for war, which was interpreted as a new beginning after boredom (Anz, 2010).

Beutin et al. (2019) explained that this "boredom" was caused by society, as industrialization progressed and led to urbanization. Because of this, the feeling evolved that humanity exists only to serve as a workforce in society, which meant as well to live within a mass society riddled with alienation. The life was focused on working following mass culture; consequently, the movement of expressionism set an opposite position to this: to set back the focus to the experiences in a numb surrounding. In visual art for example this has been expressed by choosing intensive colours to voice emotions.

In addition, philosophical ideas of Nietzsche and especially Nihilism was spread widely in Europe and it influenced many author and artists during this time, and these ideas supported the opinion of finding the "new values" which explained, for instance, the enthusiasm for war. Another influence in literature and art was by Freud and his psychoanalysis. Based on these influences the expressionists fought with crisis, identity loss, alienation, and numbness and generated art which focused on topics such as war, father-son-conflict, metropolis, the loss of identity, chaos, death, sickness, and mania. Often, the choice of topics could be called "dark" and the works broke taboos in comparison to e.g. the movement of Impressionism (Beutin et al., 2019).

According to Anz (2010), a characteristic of expressionistic poetry is the change of style: poems did not follow anymore any schema of rhythm, rhyme, stanzas, etc. like in typical traditional poetry before. Even though at the beginning of the expressionist culture sonnets were used with a rhyme scheme, the sonnets were misleading due to the contrast of the choice of topic and gave a wrong expectation towards the reader of something positive. However, later the poetry started to become rhymeless and was almost built like prose text (Anz, 2010).

It can be said that Benn had certain influences of this time which affected the creation of his poetry, as he explained about the creation of "Morgue" in his autobiographical documents:

*Als ich die „Morgue“ schrieb, mit der ich begann und die später in so viele Sprachen übersetzt wurde, war es abends, ... Es war ein Zyklus von sechs Gedichten, die alle in der gleichen Stunde aufstiegen, sich herauswarfen, da waren, vorher war nichts von ihnen da; als der Dämmerzustand endete, war ich leer, hungernd, taumelnd und stieg schwierig hervor aus dem großen Verfall. (Benn, 1961, p.45)*

*When I wrote the "Morgue", with which I began and which has been later translated into many languages, it was evening, ... it was a series of six poems, which all rose the same hour and threw themselves out, then nothing was there, I was empty. hungry and when the doze state ended, tumbling and emerge difficultly from the great decay.*

Benn created his poems by sharing an experience of his sense of life within one hour and "let it out" until he became empty. It is not poetry which has been created with much thought or many iterations to express a concept, instead it is a feeling and experience of life which he is sharing. In addition, Benn was very influenced by nihilism. According to Runge (1957), his work indicates that he had influences of nihilism: he has a negation towards religion, he was convinced that due to negation the cognitive process reaches its best performance, he rejects anything which reaches a goal and meaning, the human and the politics. However, Benn did not identify himself as an expressionist, as he wrote in a letter in 1917 that he does not know what expressionism means (Benn & Lohner, 1969). Nevertheless, it can be said, Benn was influenced by the circumstances of the time and the philosophy of nihilism when creating these poems. Even though he is called nowadays

expressionist, in the times of creation he was for sure avant-garde – ahead of his time.

### **Additional interpretation**

Based on these possible influences further interpretation can be made. “Kleine Aster” can be counted as a shared experience by Benn as he has been educated and worked professionally as a doctor which made him familiar with these processes and perceiving death. Because of this, it can be concluded that the indifferent language of the processes comes from his background. On the other hand it shows a perspective towards death which no one wants to talk about, a perspective that so many people in the field of medicine have shared but never exposed: the indifferent emotions towards death and how something simple as a flower can create excitement. Many characteristics of Expressionism can be found in the poem and it can be seen that he was influenced by these times. In particular, nihilism is reflected in the poem through the numbness towards death and the impiety towards it, the human body is nothing in the end, and the life will end with the dead as well.



# Diving into the poem

This section explores four translations of the poem which all used different semiotic channels. The first translation is a musical song composition which has been created by Ralf Gothóni and the other three translations have been created by me, the author, each of them iterated and reflected based on the previous one. An analysis comparing all of them should provide an overview of their differences due to the choice of medium. In addition, audience feedback to two of the translations are reviewed to gather an understanding of the perception and to validate the successfulness of the translations. The first self-created translation is a discarded attempt and is not included in the comparison as it is incomplete.

# Gothóni's musical translations

In my search for translations of the chosen poem in other languages, I figured out that the Finnish composer Ralf Gothóni has translated and published in 1978 the whole poem collection "Morgue" in Finnish. In addition, he wrote compositions to these poems for soprano/tenor and piano. His work was available as music sheets from the library. After contacting him I had the chance to meet Gothóni and interviewed him about his processes and choices of his work. According to him, he produced with the Finnish broadcasting company YLE recordings of the play, but these recordings are not accessible to the public. However, I was able to listen to the recordings during the interview and would describe the music as positive-sounding while the lyrics were a little bit more neutral sounding but still in a lovely tone. This section investigates the process of possible intersemiotic translation into music of the poem "Kleine Aster" based on the interview with Gothóni.

## The interview

The interview was originally conducted in German therefore this is the English translation of the German transcription. The original transcription can be found in the appendix (page 100).

**My idea is to translate Gottfried Benn poem "Klein Aster" as you have done. You translated it into Finnish and compose music to it.**

Yes, these are genius poems. All of them and they are spectacular.

**How did you get to started with Gottfried Benn?**

When I read them [the poems], they were very interesting because they are a horrible matter and presented brutally but at the same time, the realism is so interesting since you get the idea of how a pathologist is working. He needs to gain his fantasy and interests towards life by the death and these corps are seen in the perspective of the doctor and he does not see them as something terrible or as tragic disaster instead he sees them with a scientists interest and gets a totally different insight towards the death and life. And because of this I have created the compositions and interestingly in a very romantic style, not tragic nor

dramatic.

**You have composed it romantically?**

The huge range between Realism and Romanticism caught much attention. Especially older people are shocked. Nevertheless, there are still things you cannot do anymore nowadays. For example, the word "Negerbraut"<sup>1</sup> you cannot say it anymore. Back then I could not change it since it was like this in the original. When someone sings it nowadays, I would certainly say not to use that word and instead "Penner" (negative word for someone homeless) since it has the same number of syllables and it fits. It explains why a Penner has dirty feet. And this is also a problem you cannot just write "Negerbraut" in the program and because of this, a decision against the poems must be done. And this is the issue, I cannot judge what the truth was in the past.

As I remember Gottfried Benn got almost the Nobel prize for literature but he did not get it because after the war he was claimed to be a fascist and of course a Nazi but this is certainly difficult to know if the poetry's meaning was an artistic range so that the Realism could carry to the extreme. But I cannot comment on it. I can give another comment for example to Yrjö Kilpinen, a famous composer, who composed many songs, over 800 songs also he has composed brothers in arms marches but he was certainly not a Nazi in the aspects that he would like have seen the Holocaust happen. He had a great interest towards Wagner and the kind of *Übermensch* character and this has nothing to do with politics nothing with our historical politics but it is a philosophical idea about humanity and this is how I see it with Kilpinen. That's why it is very very difficult to comment on it and that is why I kept it open what the truth of Benn's personality is. I focused only on what he has written, the genius way of poem writing. For example, in "Kleine Aster" is the beer-hauler obviously full by beer and this beautiful Aster drinks his blood and all his other liquids. It is a two-dimensional matter: he has drunk himself to death and the Aster drinks from his inside to live. It is a cycle and makes the poem so beautiful. When Benn wrote "*Trinke dich satt*", I used it twice. First, the loud voice and then comes an echo for the realism of the beer-hauler and the other

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<sup>1</sup> Negerbraut means "Nigger bride" and is the title of the fourth poem in the collection of "Morgue" in the poem it is described that the "Neger" has two dirty left feet



dimension of the Aster. For me, the symbolism was very important.

**How exactly did you translate it into music?**

**What was the process?**

There are many possibilities. For me, it means that text and music are creating unity, so when they somehow find each other with the emotions of the composer then they create a new layer. Music is a layer of creativity, of time and it is more specific. Of course, in the poem itself are many different dimensions since a poem is a shorted prose and a whole novel can be written about a poem. But this connection between text and music brings a new matter because the tones give a new possibility for information towards a text. When the composer has felt it for himself, it can happen also by accident, but especially when the composer felt such an emotional landscape through a sentence, he can express the sensual vibe. “*Ein ersoffener Bierfahrer wurde auf dem Tisch gestemmt*” for example, that is an image which can be seen and felt. And the drowned beer-hauler has even humour in the beginning because he probably fell in the beer barrel and drowned. That is the funny side and when he has been heaved onto the table that meant he did not manage by himself because he was too heavy and the corpse was heaved with several people and then “boom” and some beer is running out of his body. It is a characterisation and you could make a film out of it. So, the music gives a kind of level of the poem with associations and subconscious feelings and perceptions which happened, thus I have created these compositions very fast I believe it just took 5 days, so about a piece per day. Strangely enough, is that when I compose for texts that I receive the text by someone. I have not discovered the texts on my own, but my then-wife found them and thought I might be interested in them, so I was, and I got started.

**Did you want to give with these compositions and translations something for the world or was this a personal project?**

Certainly, something should be given and maybe one of the most important things is that with such a work is to try to evoke the audience with thoughts, questions, and findings with these shocking issues: Why? How? What is with my life? Does this exist really? The Romanticism? These should be all challenges. And if the music would be played without song it would sound very romantic. I made some plagiarism from Chopin, Strauss and Mendelssohn, small character pieces of dif-

ferent composers so same as in the poems, I dig up like a pathologist from the dead composers. It is a collage of different realities of life, also unreal ones.

You have to read the poems several times and after twenty times of reading the same thing happens as with the pathologic student: the first time he investigates a corpse then they stink and so on and then they get used to it and start to see the body as a technical phenomenon. I knew someone in the Finnish pathology and since I wrote the pieces, I wanted to know how it is to be a pathology student. I wore a white coat with seven or eight other students and a 69 year old policeman was opened, he had lung cancer and was a heavy smoker, everything was taken out the same as in a slaughterhouse, all inner organs have been taken out and that is really interesting to see and then it is understandable how a pathologist can get used to it. Every time when a pathologist finds something, then this the most interesting thing, that is his work to see what happens with the mechanical body, with the genius composition of the material, which was once alive, to see what happen inside and why it does not work anymore. This is utterly amazing, and I have huge respect for all pathologists who got to know this side of life that is as important as we are nowhere. I believe that we have certainly a soul. We are mechanical people, who are controlled by the soul and when we die our leftover remains and everything else disappears. Also, the golden flower could be a symbol, something small is in our body, you could say it might have symbolised the soul this flower. The flower is usually not something which you can see but someone put it there and everything disappears but not the most important thing. This is a religious poem with the humour at the same time.

**But I do not believe that many see this poem in that perspective**

That is why a composer needs to read very much to understand these poems, to be open to these poems with all the possibilities and the world of the poems. The different depths of all layers need to be seen.

**Are literature and philosophy influencing your work much?**

Literature belongs very much to music. We are informing constantly the whole time something about humanity some mystical and hidden truth about us in all kinds and we are touching the matter when no words are existing, capable to find the perceptions and contacts, and

to translate with the sounds and words. The most beautiful for me is the coherence between words and music, hence the songs. Words and music are creating a unity like a pianist and a singer.

**How do you think about translation into other media?**

Benn's poems could have been shot but hopefully, this did not exist since this was not the general idea because it would create and connects it too much with the visuals instead with the deep inside. That is the reason why Herman Hesse stated in his last will that his novels never should appear on stage.

**If you would translate these poems again would it sound the same?**

Definitely not, but I have no idea how it could sound but for sure not the same as I have written in 1978. Back then it was a conscious decision to bring together two different characters who are so apart from each other. Realism and Romanticism what a character these connections can bring.

**After being able to be able to listen to some of the pieces I noticed some words are longer in their pronunciation, therefore, I asked Gothóni why does the singing sometimes have long sounds?**

Music functions within time and there are tensions coming from the inner perceptions and these are more important which are better shown by longer sounds than shorter ones. It is a mix of meanings. There is little information e.g. of pop music (pop music is played in the background during the interview) it is just "shak-shak-shak" and everything is said, while classical music is working with changes and energies. A melody means the inner perception of the psychological whole of a human. Like the breathing, it is reflected by the sound, it can be short and long. The length gives information when it has been understood what has been told and this is the difficulty in playing for the musician.

**What was the reaction to your compositions?**

Many people were obviously shocked, and people have asked why I have done that. Once it was played in the Hamburg music college when I was a professor there. I gave the pieces to two students, a soprano and a pianist for an event in the evening. I thought it was a student

event but later I got to know it was a huge scandal since it was an event for the sponsors of the college and many old ladies around 70 have sat there and listened to it.

But to be morbid and honest when you do not understand at 70 that life ends with death then you have forgotten something very important in your whole life. The life is there to learn to die, this is what you practice. It is not that you have to think all time about death, but you should learn from life, it is like an education and graduation exam is to get free from here. There are many possibilities to see this.

Thank you for your insights.

## Translation Analysis

According to Gottlieb's (2008) types of intersemiotic translation Gothóni's work can be sorted as supersemiotic translation because it adds a musical channel to the translation. The musical part is based on his own interpretation which makes this translation adaptational. Similar to Benn, Gothóni is working with the contrast of Realism and Romanticism, therefore the listener gets tricked by believing the musical composition is a sensual, dreamy, and emotional piece but with the beginning of the singing part, this illusion is broken due to the cruel realistic expression of the lyrics. Therefore, the impression of his musical piece is similar to the poem. Nevertheless, Gothóni interpreted the poem with two dimensions: one with the Aster which stands abstractly for life, and the other the cruel reality of death. Because of this, he emphasises this by using the phrase "Trink dich satt" twice in his compositions, adapting his translation.

Gothóni's background as a pianist and composer gives him the possibility to use the musical equivalences of romanticism from literature to music as this artistic era has also influenced the music. Moreover, he perceived the lyrical persona as a pathologist, and given that, he took metaphorically the role of a pathologist by taking apart musical bits of other composers. In addition, Gothóni describes this process as an emotional reflection that gives the artistic freedom of interpretation to choose the musical characteristic of the translation and is not

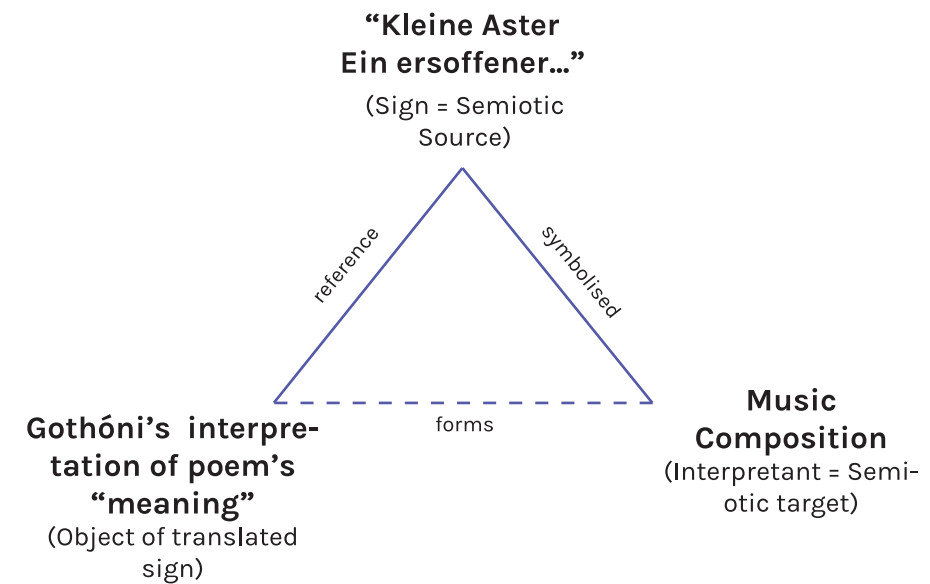
conventionalized, so no words are mapped to something specific of the original. Regardless, Gothóni does not position any possible influences of the author in his work, for example, nihilism. However, his translation also generates some loss in comparison to the original poem: due to the musical focus of romanticism, the apathy of the lyrical subject is not reflected in the musical piece. Furthermore, if a non-German speaker cannot understand the lyrics of the music, it would sound only romantic.

Despite that, a comparison can be made between the changes of the original and Gothóni's translation as in the table below. Yet, the comparison does not include any perspective towards the music sheets due to my missing background and understanding of music. Hence, this comparison is based on the interview and my own impression of the music (See Table 2).

Original	Translation
Words of the poem	Lyrics of the music piece
Process of the lyrical persona "pathologist" / Preparing bodies	Working as a pathologist by taking apart other music pieces of dead composers
Contrast of the life and death	Echoing the phrase "Trink dich satt!"
"Tricking" the reader by the title	"Tricking" the audience by playing romantic music
"Meaning" of the poem	Mapped as expression of the composer by music. E.g. taking the body apart is musically "richer" while first line of the description of the human is not as rich.

**Table 2:** Comparing elements of Gothóni's translation with the original

By reading the poem (sign) Gothóni creates an own interpretation of it which defines the "object" of the poem e.g. realism or process of a pathologist and based on this object the music composition is the interpretant. The translation is supersemiotic and adaptational. Adaptational because the composed music is based on his interpretation of the poem rather than the words of the poem.



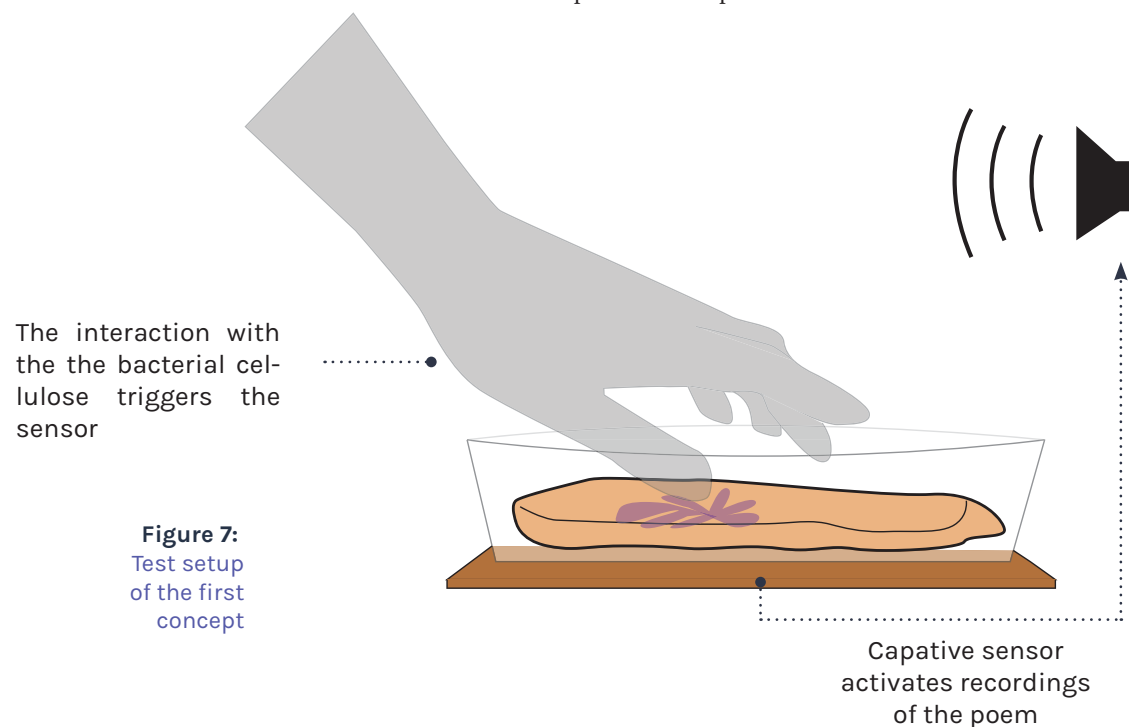
**Figure 6:** Semiosis of Gothóni's translation.



## Translation 1: Bacterial Cellulose

The first translation “Bacterial Cellulose” is a discarded attempt and the very beginning of this thesis work that started before any background research had been done. This project was created within the course “Interactive Art” taught by Matti Niinimäki in Autumn 2018/ Spring 2019 at Aalto University and because this project is linked to the course, a few requirements were essential: the artwork must be interactive and it should be exhibited, therefore it needs to pass certain exhibition standards, such as safety and maintenance.

The initial idea for the first translation was to recreate the process of the pathologist or to any similar type of job of preparing a body and seeing the flower. The apathy of the lyrical subject should be received by experiencing the process. Certainly, recreating or using some cadaver was out of the question, not only due to ethical reasons but it would be arduous to maintain. Consequently, the idea came up to recreate the poem’s story, the interaction with the corpse, by using bacterial cellulose. Based on previous experience with bacterial cellulose



**Figure 8:** Creation of Kombucha. Left: Kombucha which should be touched by the visitor; Right: Kombucha with flowers

(also known as Kombucha) I not only knew how to create it but also its characteristics: it feels similar to skin but it is wet and has a certain odor which made it a fitting material to imitate flesh (See Figure 8). In addition, bacterial cellulose can be augmented with other materials, for instance a flower. Because of this the bacterial cellulose with a flower added represents the same as in the poem, when the aster is in the corpse.

The first concepts were based on an idea that the visitor can interact with the bacterial cellulose which would stand as an analogy for the body. The cellulose would lie in a metallic surface as a body on a metallic autopsy table in a morgue. Moreover, the metallic surface served as a capacitive sensor, which should activate the audio files of the spoken poem in several languages when the cellulose is interacted with. The audio file should serve for the exhibition the purpose to present the poem. The idea should be iterated further after some prototyping and tests of the interaction and connect it further with the content of the poem (See Figure 7).

After creating the first simple prototype based on this early stage of the concept I tried to put myself in the perspective of the visitor of the exhibition and it felt immediately wrong as it did not share the idea I wanted to share. The concept did not communicate the same meaning as in the poem, even though the elements of the body and flower were there and tangible, no feeling of preparing a corpse and the numbness to it were given instead the focus shifted towards the cellulose itself

and the weird feeling of “slime” of the material. Similar feelings came with the playback of the poem: on the one hand, it seemed meaningless since it does not solve the problem of the loss in the translation, and on the other hand, the focus was not the audio but on the texture of cellulose.

However, the cellulose itself felt due to its characteristics unpleasant, but it did not evoke the same unpleasant emotion towards death as in the poem. Because of all these points, I decided not to progress with this concept because the attention shifted to the material and represented the poem too literally. The next step was to take a step back and start doing more research of what it means to be a translator.

Regardless of the discarded concept, a small comparison to the original can be made here as well (See Table 3):

Original	Translation
Corpse	Bacterial Cellulose
Content of the poem	Verbalization as audio file in different languages
Aster	Usage of a real flower

**Table 3:** Comparing elements of Bacterial Cellulose translation with the original poem

## Translation 2: To my beloved Aster

### Concept

“To my beloved Aster” is an approach to translate the poem into an art installation. It is activated by the viewer when entering the space, and four thermal printers are printing the poem “Kleine Aster” but separated in word classes of the subject, object, verb, and adverbial. The printers use looped thermal paper rolls and over time the prints become unreadable as the words are written and rewritten on the same paper over and over again.

The construction of the installation represents the autopsy in the

poem. The printers in the installation are showing the protagonist who is separating the body in a numb and mechanical process. Nonetheless, the viewer ends up focusing on the prints themselves like the lyrical narrator is keeping their eyes on the aster. Similarly, like the flower, the prints are stuck in the body of the work and they will become worthless since they are “dying” due to their illegibility. This work with thermal printers is an attempt to translate the poem into a contemporary medium.

### Hard/Software:

The artwork consists of four mini thermal printers, four looped thermal paper rolls (58mm wide with different lengths), a PIR sensor (HC-SR501), and an Arduino Mega with a prototype shield. All electronic components are attached to a transparent acrylic panel and as the printer modules are disassembled they are attached to the panel by 3D printed components. The whole panel is hanging down from a high position e.g. ceiling or a construction.

The software to control the whole artwork has been coded in the Arduino IDE and uses the Thermal Printer Library provided by Adafruit.

The following pages will present the setup of the components (created with Fritzling), pictures of the exhibited art installation, examples of thermal paper after they have been exhibited for a whole day and sketches (See Figure 9-15 & 17).

Additionally, a video about the installation can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/394141374> and the Arduino files can be found at Github <https://github.com/thunschuh/To-my-beloved-Aster/>



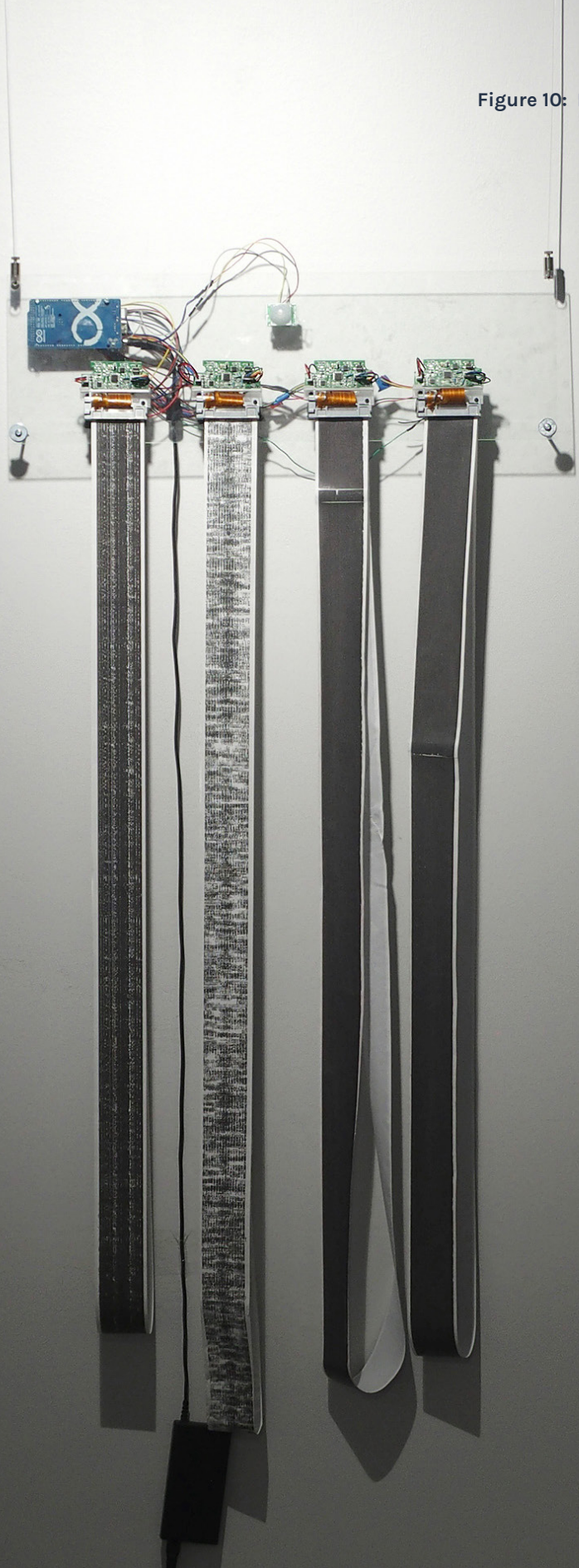


Figure 10: Full art work hanging from the ceiling

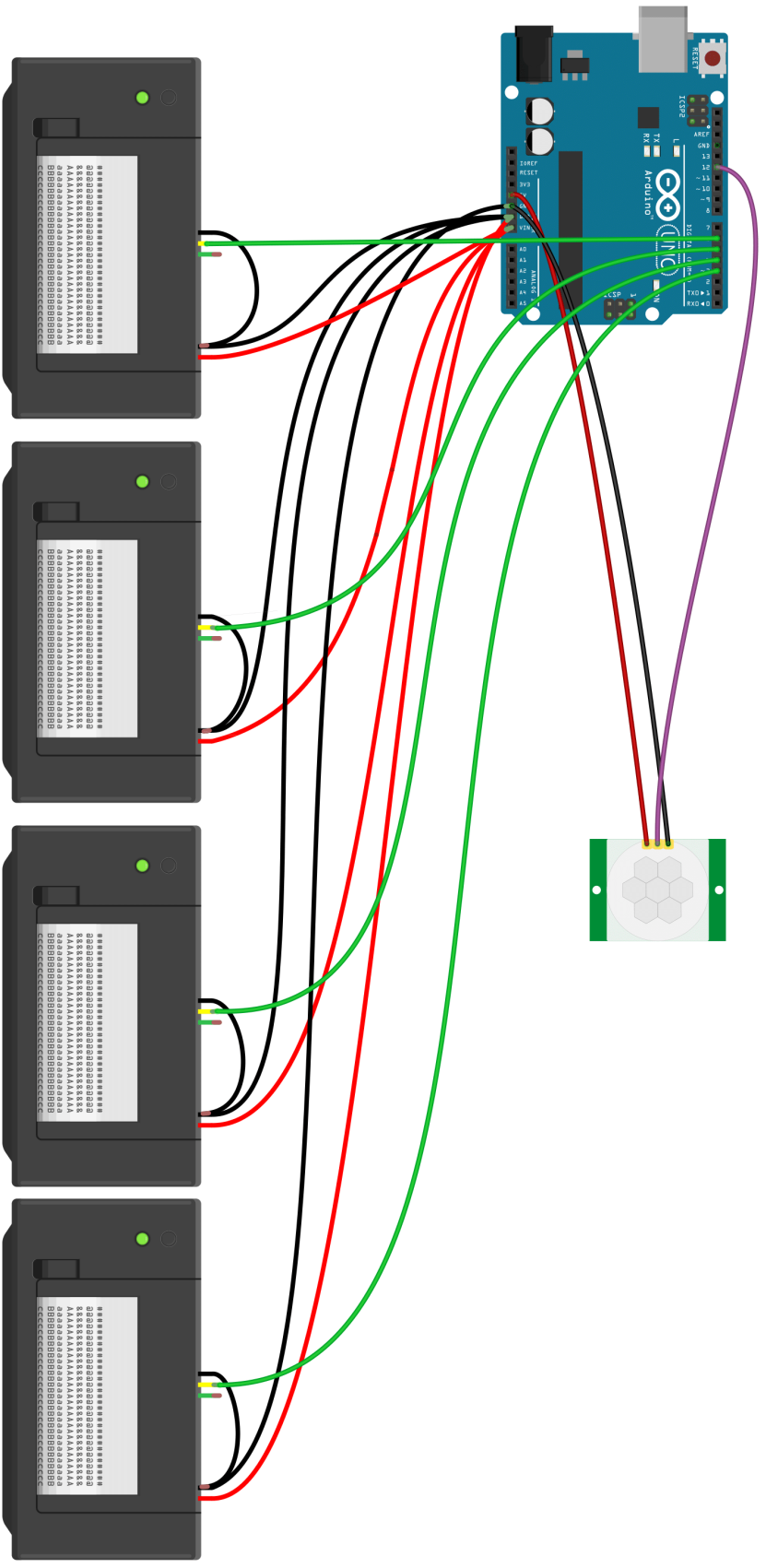
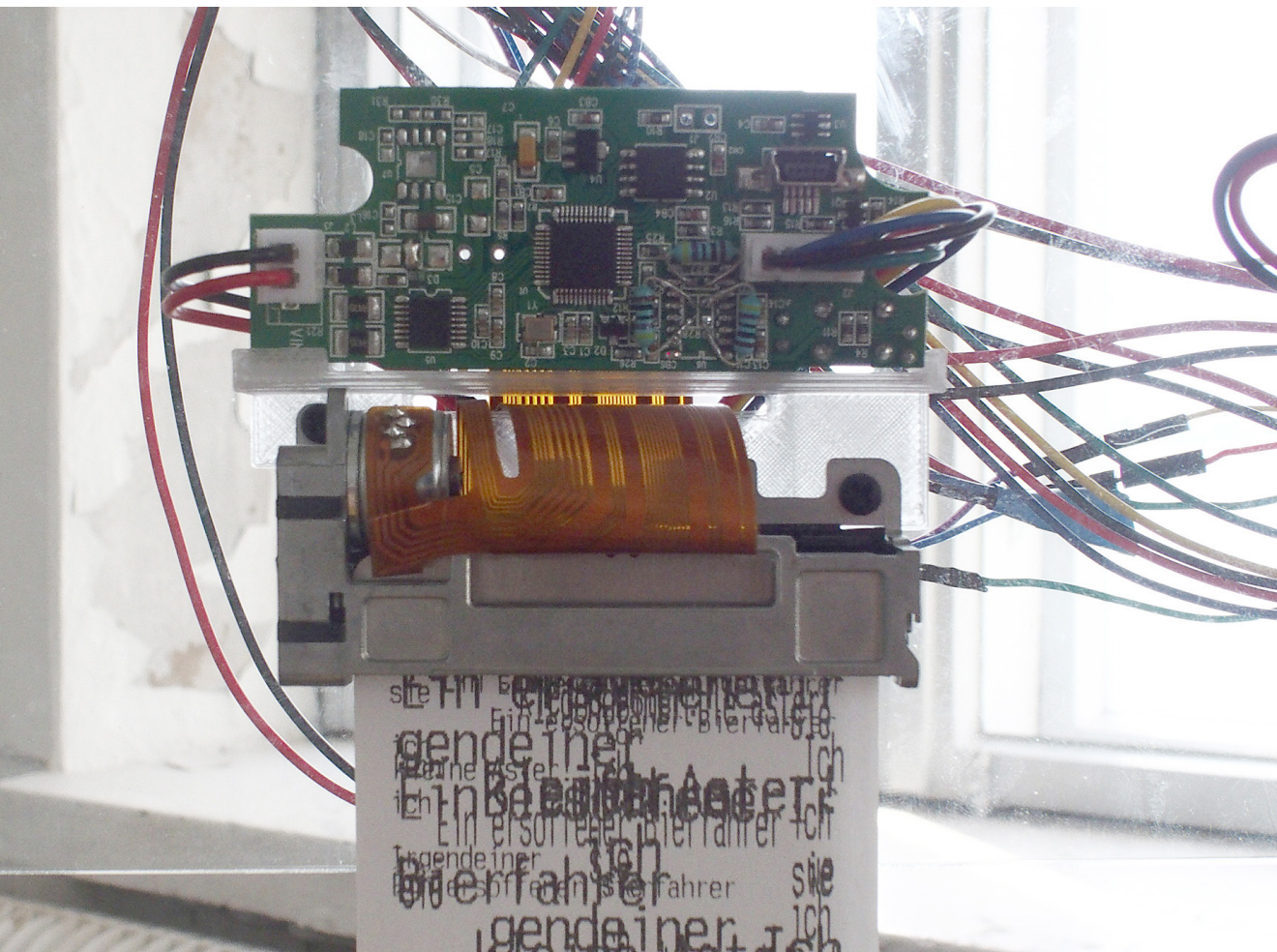


Figure 9:  
Set up of the electric components

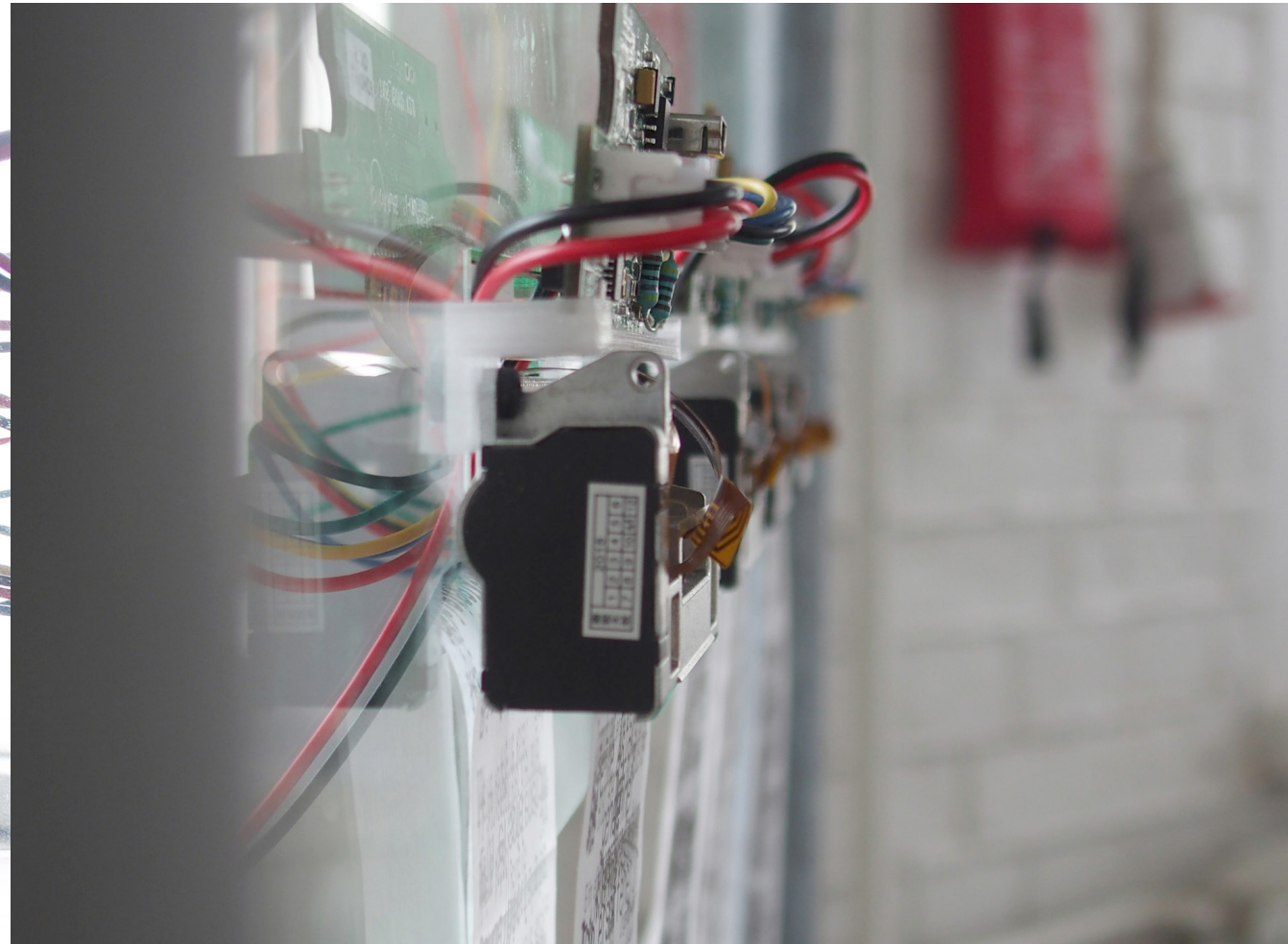








**Figure 13:**  
Close up thermal printer



**Figure 14:**  
Close up of the thermal printer from the side



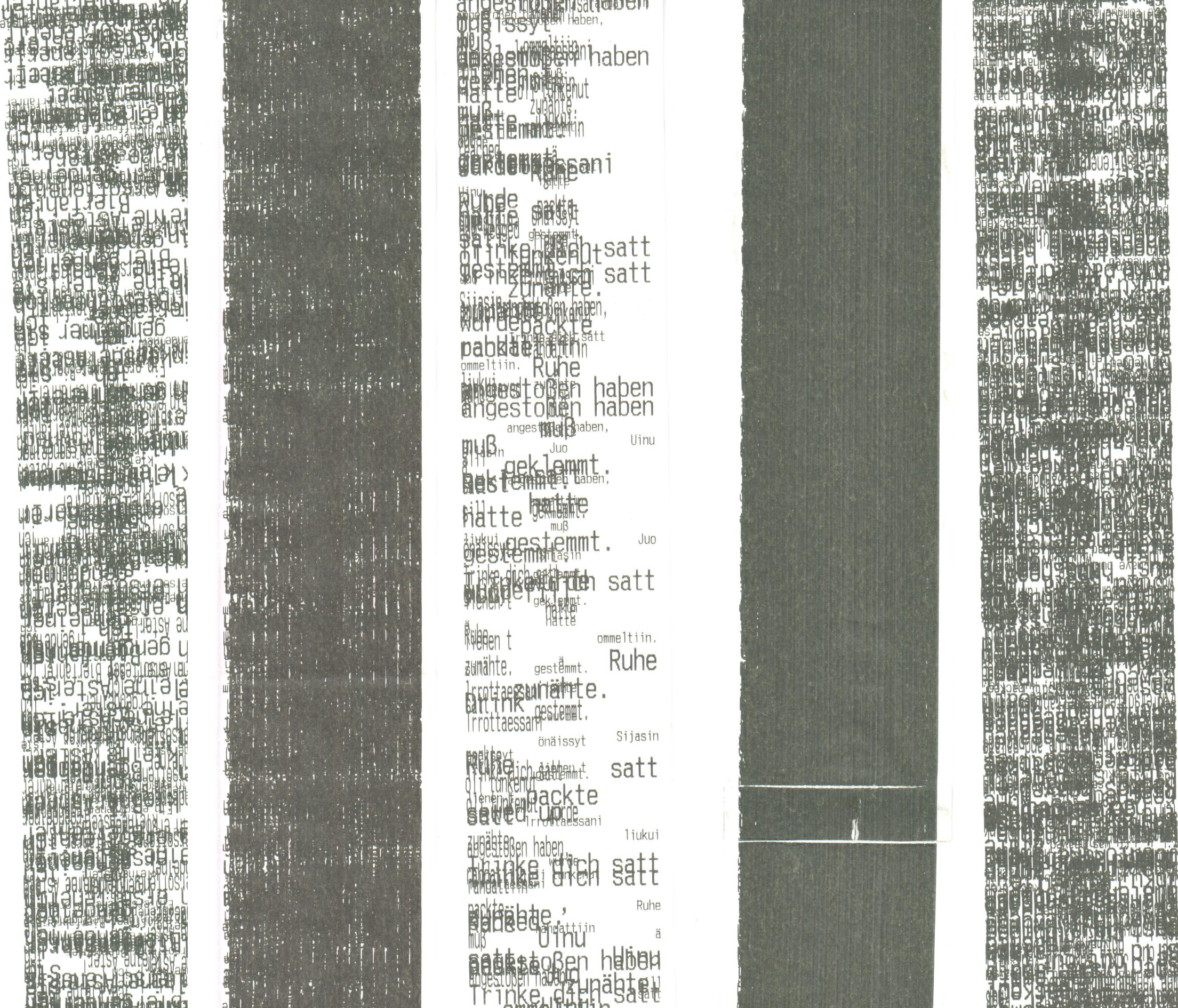


Figure 15:  
Thermal paper of  
different cate-  
gories after they  
have been loop  
printed



## Process

After discarding the first concept with bacterial cellulose I still wanted to create a translation for the course “Interactive Art”, whose results would be exhibited. Therefore, the same requirements were set as in the previous attempt. With the new start, I decided to read more about what translation is and what the process behind it means. I took a special look into the German version of Umberto Eco’s (2000) book “*Come dire quasi la stessa cosa*” (English title “Experiences in Translation”) and Walter Benjamin’s (1972) essay “*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzters*” (English title “The task of the translator”) as well as an essay commenting on Benjamin’s work. Especially Eco’s (2000) work gave many ideas and impressions regarding translation. Eco (2000) suggests echoing the intention of the text when it is about the faithfulness of translation (p. 17), this was also supported by Benjamin (1972) who claims that a bad translator only tries to communicate the content and a good poetry translation requires that the translator is able to mediate more than the ‘message’. These comments made me think more about the previous attempt: I only communicated the content but not the intention at all. The main idea of the text is not to show how to prepare a corpse, in fact it is more about the perspective to death and nihilism: no meaning and loss of all values. If the intention would have been to share the disgusting parts of a dead body, then obviously the bacterial cellulose would be better perceived. But how to communicate the message?

Since Eco and Benjamin are describing their issues based on translations of languages, I started to examine the poem’s translation into other languages as well and luckily many translations exist in various languages. I recorded my found translation of the poem by native speakers in Swedish, Finnish, English, Italian, Mandarin, and Korean and listened to them. One thing I could identify by listening to the recordings were the similarities in the sound: the poem sounds like a protocol, emotionless and neutral regardless of the spoken language. Eco (2000) commented that translations of poetry are connected to a layer of expression and this layer also leads the content. Each layer is related to each other which means that as translator these need to be seen and covered as well. Based on these findings I decided to reproduce this emotionless sound by using thermal printers and their receipts. The choice for the printers is not only based on their mechan-

ical and emotionless sound but stands also as an analogy of the process we are experiencing when encountering them. Receipt printers and printed receipts are artifacts of modern life, which we are encountering almost every day and repeated several times within one day: when we are buying something. The sound of thermal printers is almost inaudible to us due to our constant interaction with the medium. And same for the receipts: Sometimes they have some value such as a warranty, which prompts us to keep them, but more often receipts end up in the trash since they are nothing more than worthless paper. As the lyrical subject in the poem reflects his process with the corpse without any emotion and dehumanizes the person. The same happens with the encounter of printers and the receipts, the content is often not important, we identify with just something superficial e.g. “just grocery receipt from Lidl” instead of focusing on each detail, and the receipt ends up in the trash can.

Inspired by Gothóni’s way to work as a pathologist in his translation I separate the poem’s body by their word classes and each word class of subject, object, verb, and adverbial, and each of them represented by one printer. The choice of this separation was based on the analysis of the various translations. For the prints, I used three translations of the poem: German, English, and Finnish (page 105). This part should reflect on how the lyrical subject is taking apart several bodies in the same routine. The printed content does not play any specific role for transmitting the meaning nor the viewer needs to understand the text to be able to interpret the artwork, instead the texts are serving just as corpses which are taken apart.

The emphasis on the death and especially the nihilism should be represented by the prints themselves. In the beginning, the prints are readable and might be exciting for the viewer to read but over time due to random font styles and alignments the prints will become unreadable and end up to being only black. The black stands for death but also the process of the printing should reflect the idea of nihilism. However, the initial idea was not to loop the paper instead of colour them over time black to express these points, but this could not be implemented due to technical issues (See Figure 18). The title “To my beloved Aster” should invite the visitor to think about a love letter or something lovely. As in the original poem, reading the prints should lead to a

cognitive contrast, where the visitor is expecting something emotional and romantic but ends up with something seemingly meaningless: disconnected words of a poem, which slowly becomes illegible.

However, one of the greatest losses of this attempt is that the key character and frame for the poem, the aster, is gone as the literal content is not visible on first glance but furthermore on a very abstract level due to my artistic interpretation and expression. Even though it tricks the reader by the title it is not as “shocking” as the content itself, hence it did not evoke the same effect as it might do for the original poem or Gothóni’s translation. An approach to improve the loss of the literal translation could be by printing for example “cruel” content. This would also automatically lead to evoke a “shocking” effect. Nevertheless, I believe it was not the intention or idea to transmit this, therefore I left it printing the original poem.

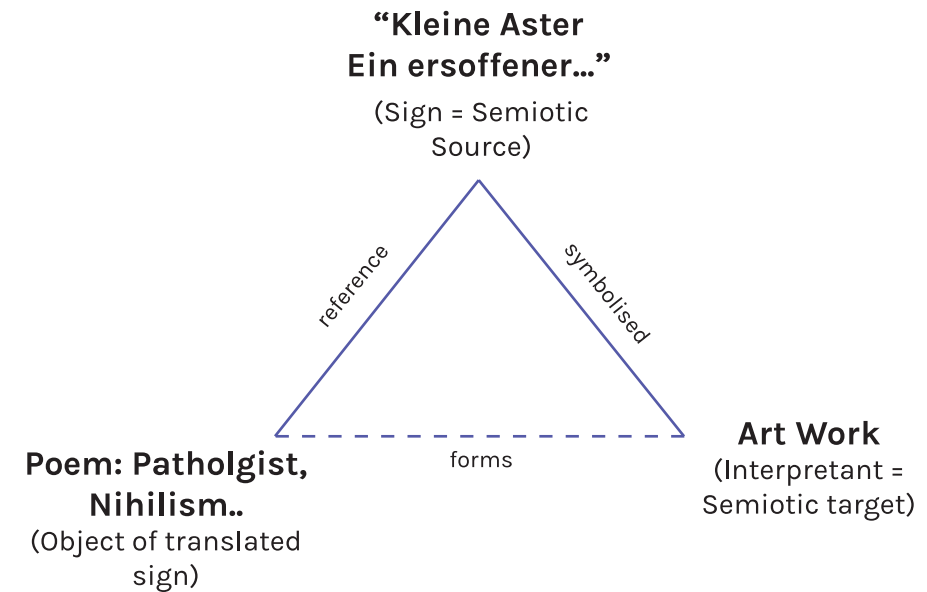
As well as in the other approaches following comparison can be made (See Table 4):

Original	Translation
Words of the poem	Printed as text
Apathy sound of the poem and lyrical subject’s “numbness”	Sound of the thermal printer very mechanical which should give an impression of meaningless and numbness
Nihilism & Death	Overprinting the prints so it becomes unreadable text; all the work is “nothing”
Process of “pathologist” / Preparing bodies	Separating the poem into clauses
Aster	The beauty at the beginning of the art installation; everything is readable and looks “interesting”
“Tricking” the reader by the title to a lovely poem	“Tricking” the reader by the title to think it is a love letter

**Table 4:** Comparing elements of “To my beloved Aster” translation with the original poem

The translation became supersemiotic because it uses more channels

then the original poem. It is adaptational because I have chosen freely the target’s medium and way of expression. The semiosis (See Figure 16) is similar to Gothóni’s but the interpretation varies, as the outcome is defined by an art installation instead of a music composition.



**Figure 16:** Semiosis of “To my beloved Aster” translation





9:30 - 17:00 Uhr

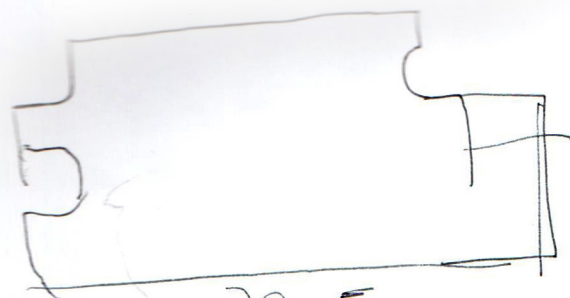
ATO neural

→ Bright light

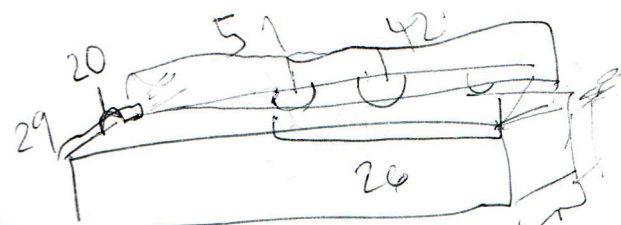
→ Peltus element

PELTIER

## Conductive Fabric



1.5 mm wide



-012.5

3m side

02mm  
p

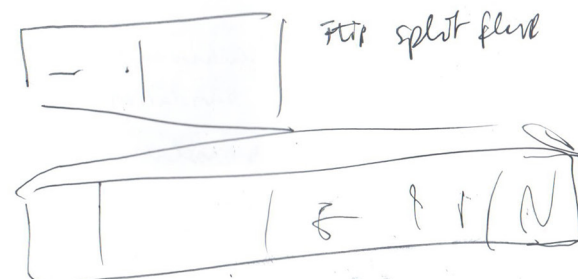
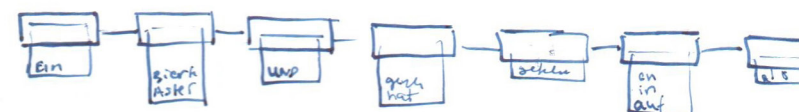
23 75 [

205 - 29 62.5

~~MBSTA~~ Wortarten

## KLEINE ASTER

Ein Arbeits ersolener Bierfahrer wurde auf  
 den Tisch gestemmt.  
 Art; Nomen Partizip Nomen V Präp  
 irgendeiner hatte eine dunkel.  
 Partizip Verb Präp Art Adj  
hellliche Aster in den Mund  
 Adj S Präp Art Nomen  
~~gestemmt~~ gestemmt.  
 Partizip  
Als ich von der Brust auf  
 Konj. Pron Präp Art Nomen Präp  
unter der Haut  
 Präp  
mit einem langen Messer  
 Advb Art Adj N  
Zunge und Gaumen hervor  
 N Konj Nomen Verb  
Schnitt, muß ich sie  
 Verb Ps Pron  
angestoßen haben, denn sie  
 Partizip Verb Advb Pron  
glitt in das nebenliegende  
 Verb Präp Pron Advb  
Gehirn  
 Nomen



FTIR split fluid

PROCESS

Intention  
↳ Gedichtsanalyse  
Abkürzungen

look like  
just nerves

## Intention

• Nihilism

Human is nothing?

Body <sup>15</sup> ~~matter~~ matter

Body ~~expression~~  
insane ~~to~~ absurd / surrea  
expressionism.

shocking | unexpected |

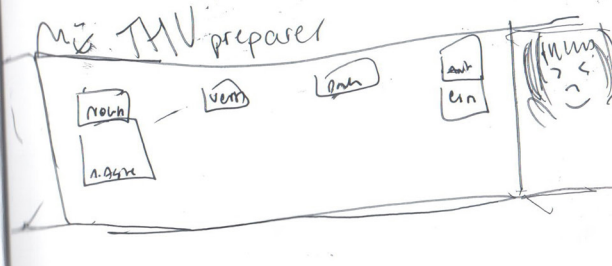
literal

Asta

dead body

① idea  
h.h.

Quiz THV preparation



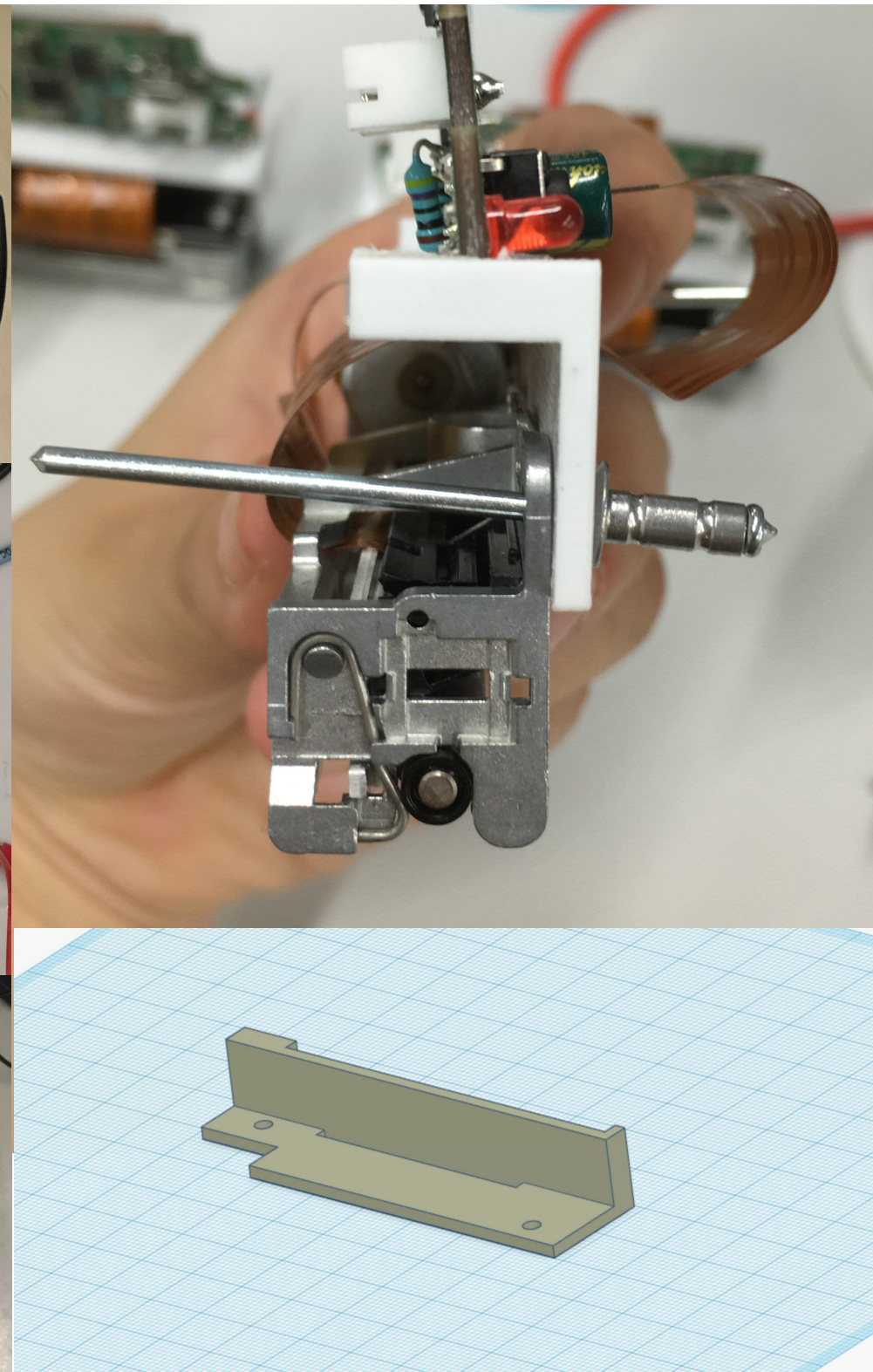
**Figure 17:**

Sketches for the ideation of the concept for "To my beloved Aster"





**Figure 18:**  
Experiments to  
darken thermal  
paper  
with a radiator  
(top), with a  
peltier element  
(middle), with ink  
(bottom)



**Figure 19:**  
3D Model for the  
printer module to  
attach printers to  
the panel



## Translation 3: Isotype

The third approach to translate was executed by choosing the medium of graphics. With the usage of the Isotype principles, a visualization of the poem was created (See Figure 21). The title should immediately give an impression of the visuals and a connection to the topic: the process of the pathologist around the year 1912, since the source is the poem was written in this year. Therefore, the pictograms should be immediately seen as corpses. The y-axis represents several corpses and due to the dehumanization, they are just represented as an object with numbers such as “Corpse 1”, while the x-axis represents the steps of the pathologist: for this the detailed steps are left out and just represent the opening of the body and then the closing. Further, the utilization of the pictograms should strengthen the point of generalized illustration with no details. The text is written in German as the original and in English which should serve as lingua franca to support enough to understand the graphics completely; however, the visualization should be also understandable without any text.

### Process

After creating my first own translation with the thermal printers I knew this work is eventually too abstract and can only be understood with an explanation. On the other hand, it missed some parts of the poem. Therefore, I was wondering if I can add the visual component with my interpretation of the poem together.

Because of my supervisor’s recommendation, I investigated Isotype (International System of Typographic Picture Education) as a tool for creating a possible translation since its idea is to communicate with pictograms without any barriers of language and culture. I read the Neurath & Kross’s (2016) book “*Die Transformierer*” to acquire a better understanding of this process. Neurath was one of the longest employees of the institute and co-creator of the Isotype. Based on the book I learned that Isotype started as data visualization to communicate data simply, so that it can be read easily. Following the principles to simplify the visuals e.g. when showing a representative number of women, the graphic does not need to show the details of their hair, dresses, and

## Täglicher Prozess eines Pathologen um 1912

Daily process of a pathologist around 1912

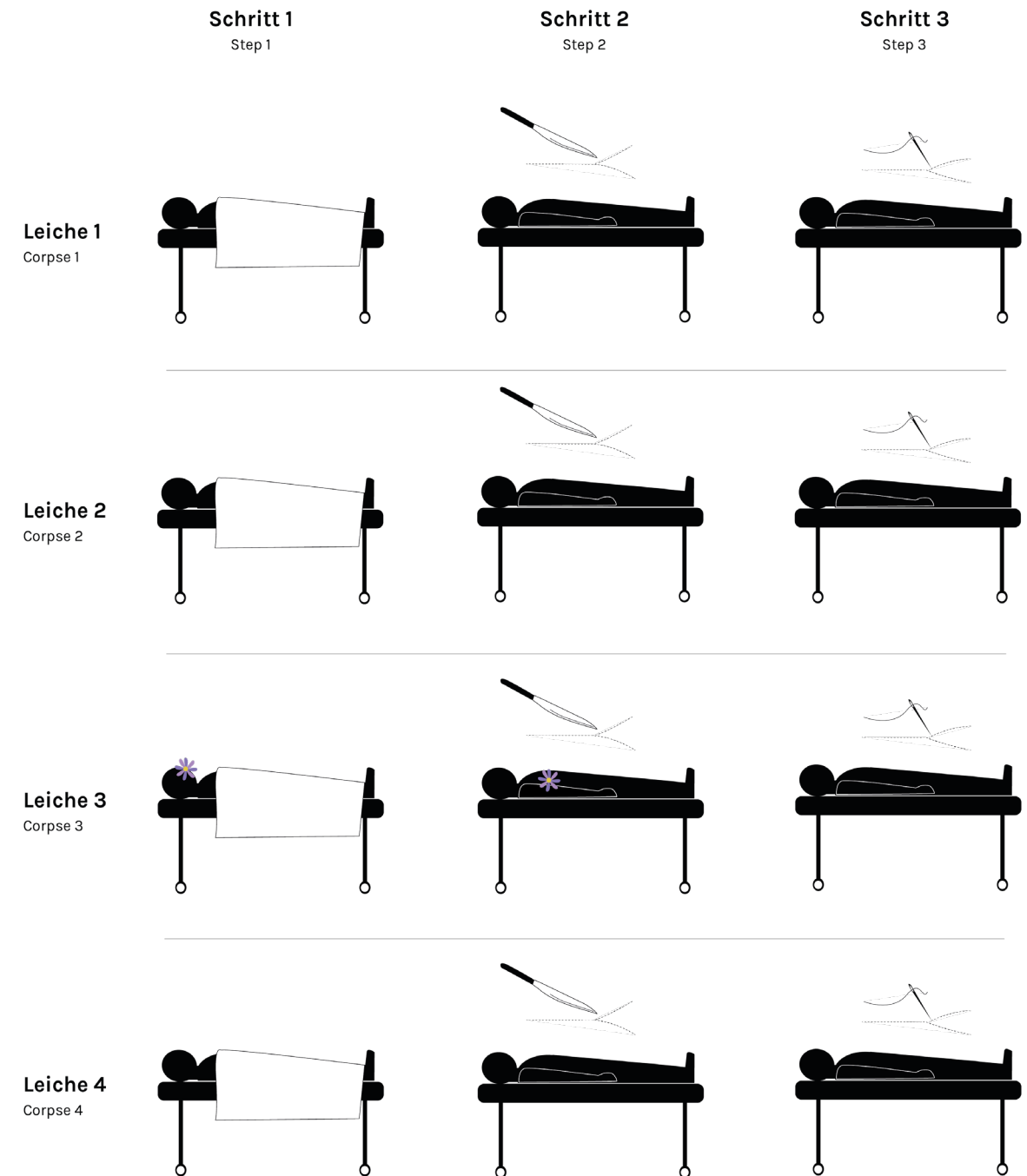
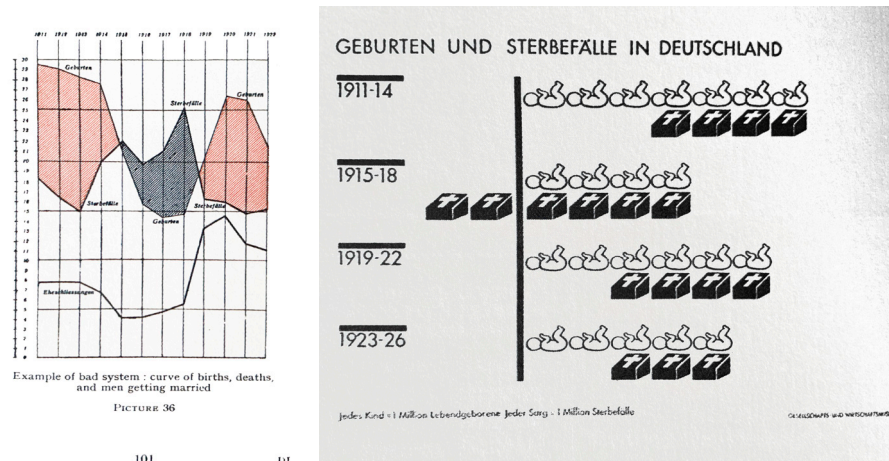


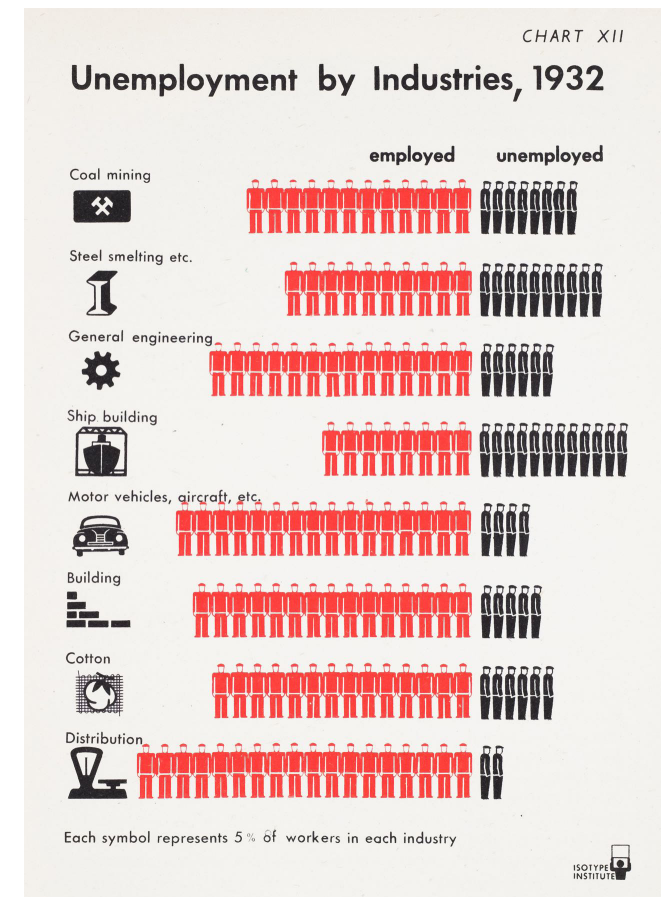
Figure 21: Isotype translation

faces but instead, a simple shape of the woman would be enough to present a woman. The visuals should not distract the viewer from the message and should be so simple that they could be understood without almost any additional words. Colours should be only used to emphasize something, for example, to differentiate groups. In addition, another important characteristic of Isotype was to work with the axes and repetition of similar facts or characteristics to show the simple contrast. In other words. As a result, the visuals are focusing to represent the facts rather than details, and they should be understood and grasped easily by everyone (For examples, see Figure 20 and See Figure 22).



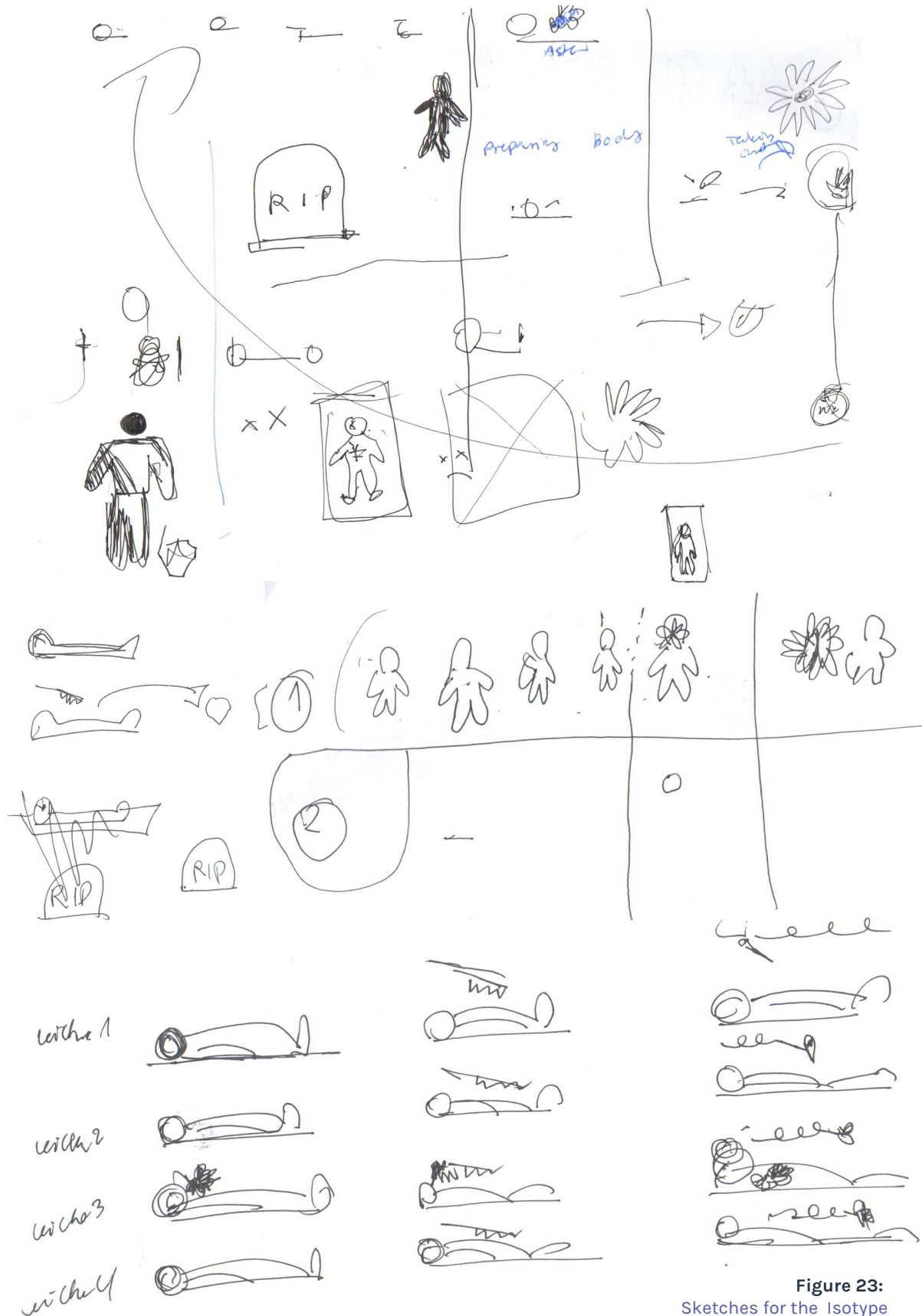
**Figure 20:** Visualization of death and birth rates. Left is Neurath's example of a bad visualisation and on right a visualization following the early principles of Isotype. Reprinted from "Die Transformierer" by Kinross, R. and Neurath, M., 2016, p. 20 & 22.

To begin with, the most challenging part of the visual's translation was to figure out how to portray a corpse. By thinking about representation of death a cross or a tombstone came immediately to mind but they were dropped fast since these would show what happened with the corpse afterward and not what happens during the process of preparing a body as described in the poem. After some brainstorming of how it could look like, a presentation of a dead body lying on a metal table arose as an idea, a body with a typical Y-cut on the chest which takes place during autopsies and by adding "x" as eyes as it emphasizes



**Figure 22:** An example of a data visualization with Isotype principles. Retrieved from <https://ea-gereyes.org/isotope-books/isotype-book-young-prager-theres-work-for-all>

the death. An initial idea was to work with the principles of the axes to show that the corpse with an aster is more unique or special than other corpses. So, the first idea was to represent in the first row several corpses, one of them with a flower and this corpse would continue in the next column. The next question that came up was how to visualize some steps which are described in the poem such as taking out the tongue. After sketching the first idea (See Figure 233) it felt like the corpse with the aster is the only corpse that is prepared. Also, I did not feel confident with the visuals at all. I started to think again about the principles and browsed through the examples and had a discussion with my friend Wiebke, a graphic designer who pointed out to focus more on the facts. So I did, the facts of this poem are that the process of a pathologist becomes objective, the pathologist sees many corpses every day. A flower is eventually exciting but, in the end, it is still a body like any other. These thoughts resulted in the final visualization,



**Figure 23:**  
Sketches for the Isotype translation

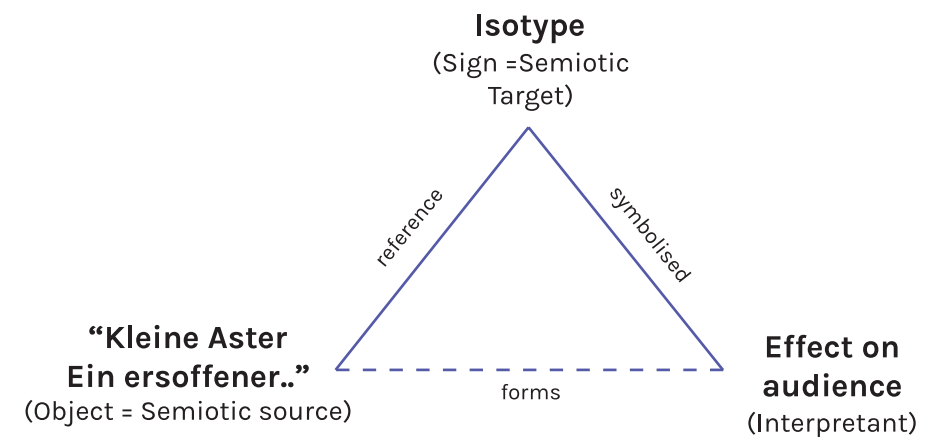
which represents four corpses with the same procedure and without any in-between steps of taking the body parts out and only visuals of the opening and closing the body. The only difference is that one corpse has a flower on his face and then in his body.

The translated elements between the original and translation can be seen in See Table 5:

Original	Translation
Process of pathologist	Information graphic
Aster	Pictogram
Emotionless feelings / Sound	Reduced objective visualization of the pictograms
Perspective to the death	Repetition of the visuals

**Table 5:** Comparing elements of the Isotype translation with the original poem

From the perspective of semiotics, this translation is an icon since it represents the similarities of the real process of a pathologist. Based on the semiosis this translation focuses on the effect on the viewer as they are the interpretant in the semiosis and can be considered as Quieroz's & Aguiar's (2015) second semiosis process model (See Figure 24).



**Figure 24:** Semiosis of Isotype translation

Based on Gottlieb's (2008) types of intersemiotic translation this translation can be counted as a conventionalized deverbilized translation



from a verbal source text to a nonverbal target. Even though it does not completely view the content in the same sense as the poem tells the story, it is focused on the precise facts by representing the content as pictograms. In addition, it is diasemiotic because it does not add more channels, but it changes the channel from the original.

## Comparison

Based on the three completed translations: Gothóni's music composition, the art installation "To my beloved Aster" and the Isotype translation, a comparison was made based on the semiotic context as they

Work	Original	Translations	Gathóni	To my beloved Aster	Isotype
Source and Target	Verbal as source		Verbal to Nonverbal	Verbal to Nonverbal	Verbal to Nonverbal
Medium	Poetry		Music Composition	Art Installation	Information Graphic
Type of translation	n/a		Deverbalizing Adaptational	Deverbalizing Adaptational	Deverbalizing Conventionalized
Type of channels	Text		Supersemiotic	Supersemiotic	Diasemiotic
Semiosis (Object, sign, interpretant)	Word, Rythm, etc., - Figure of speech, Signs - Ideas of the author		Poem's object "meaning" - Poem itself - Music Composition	Poems object "meaning" - Poem itself - Art installation	Poem itself - Information graphic - Effect on viewer

**Table 6:** Comparison of the translation with the original poem based on the aspects of the semiotics

have individual targets and semioses (See Table 6), to be able to analyze the effect of the differences between them.

One of the major differences between the translation is that the Isotype translation has a different semiosis, the poem object is not determined by the interpretation but is more focused to represent the facts of the poem. This on the other hand made this translation more conventionalized as the others which are "freer" in their translation. Moreover, the different translations have also some varieties in their messages it can be separated into two parts: the poem itself by the representation of words, content, syntax, etc. and the interpretative part which is based on the translator's perspective (See Table 7). If the translation contains the same semiotic channel as the original source, like Gothóni's translation used the poem's text as lyrics, all the parts of the poem can be found in the intersemiotic translation as well. However, due to his own interpretation and adding a layer of music it is only assumed that the audience understands the sign system behind it, i.e. the German language.

## Viewer's feedback

To grasp the effect of the translation, surveys were implemented to figure out what a viewer will perceive from the translation. Due to the CoViD-19 pandemic, no exhibition of my translations could be arranged with the option to interview the visitor and gather their perspective. Even though "To my beloved Aster" has been exhibited twice, no sufficient comments were collected during these exhibitions. Because of this, two independent online surveys for the translation "To my beloved Aster" and "Isotype" were created. Due to copyright issues and no access to the performed music, a survey for Gothóni's translation could not be conducted.

Each survey is asking two mandatory questions, the first is to tell a story based on the translation to receive the participants' perspective of what they are interpreting the content is, to be able to compare this content with the initial idea of the work. On the other hand, the second question is asking what emotion and associations are perceived, to understand if the artist's interpretation is communicated in the translation. Additionally, a voluntary text field is added for the participant to fill out to gather other comments about the artwork which does not

Original	Gothóni	To my beloved Aster	Isotype
Parts of the poem			
Words	Lyrics	Printed Receipt	n/a
Rhythm	Adapted based on the interpretation	Transposed as printer's noise	Transposed as repetition of the visuals
Content	Lyrics	n/a	Pictogram
Aster	Lyrics	"Aesthetics" of the prints in the beginning	Pictogram
Rhymes	Lyrics	n/a	n/a
Interpretation			
Perspective to death	Lyrics (if the lyrics are interpreted)	Adapted based on the idea of deaf of the viewers on perspective of printers	Objective and not detailed visualizations
Nihilism	Lyrics (if the lyrics are interpreted)	Overprinted prints	n/a
Process of pathologist	By acting as pathologist	Dividing the poem into lexical items	Visualizations
"Tricked" reader's expectation by the title	Romantic music vs. lyrics	n/a	n/a
Contrast life and death	Repeating of the lyrics "Trink Dich satt!"	n/a	n/a

**Table 7:** Translated elements in comparison to the original

fit the previous questions. The surveys are anonymous and should be answered by someone who is not influenced by me, thus, the questionnaire has been shared with people who have no idea about the translation's ideas to receive the most objective perspective to the translations. Moreover, each survey has been answered by different people to avoid an impact on the other translation.

The questionnaire introduces shortly that it investigates intersemiotic translation and the effect of the medium, but no further information or background of the poem is provided, as the participant should not be influenced by the poem or start to interpret the content of the translation work by too much background information. One work is broadly introduced as "Art Installation", which represents the "To my beloved Aster" translation and it is depicted with footage and photos and the other one is introduced as "Information Graphic" which is the Isotype translation shown as images (page 108).

In total, the questionnaire for the "To my beloved Aster" translation was filled out by 24 people and the Isotype translation by 19 people. Based on Braun's & Clarke's (2006) methodology the thematic analysis was applied to explore the results. For each survey, all answers were manually coded and categorized by using the online whiteboard tool Miro. Each answer was sorted with "post-its", some answers were even duplicated, or separated since they covered several categories. All answers, categorized by theme, can be seen in the attachment (page 120). Admittedly, some answers to the translation work "To my beloved Aster" gave rather feedback to improve the artwork, described literally what they are seeing, or were simply too broad answers not corresponding to the viewer's personal perspective and impressions of the artwork. Consequently, these answers were not included in the analysis. In the end, the Information Graphic survey was sorted into 16 themes and the Art Installation survey resulted in 14 themes (page 131). After this step, the themes were reviewed, as some of the themes overlapped with each other, until they became a sufficient thematic map (See Figure 25 & See Figure 26).

The impressions of the Isotype translation contains two major themes: one is the content itself, the idea of a pathologist work and his routine, the other is curiosity and attention directed at the third corpse



because of the flower. On the other hand, there are mixed emotions to this translation, positive, negative as well as indifferent ones. The survey's answers for the translation "To my beloved Aster" revealed two themes as well: one is the individual perception whose very significant themes are loss of meaning and reflection to life. However, the impressions are also very mixed and varying from positive to negative emotions. The second theme is associations the participants

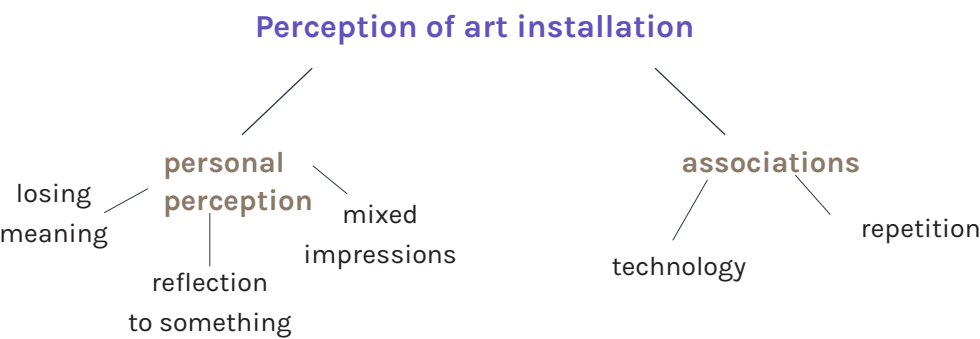


Figure 25: Thematic Map of the answers of the Art Installation

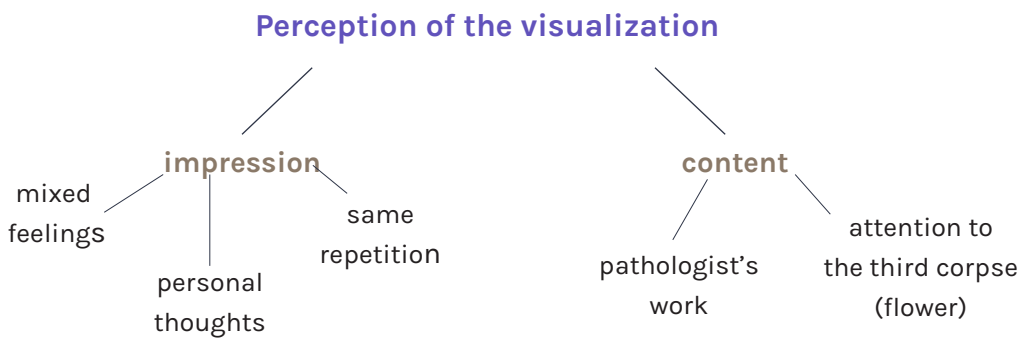


Figure 26: Thematic Map of the answers of the Isotype Translation



# Discussion

have mostly connected with this translation which were technology and repetition.

Especially when we are talking about intersemiotic translation, the translator's interpretations and thoughts have a great impact, because they decide the values which should be transferred in the target translation. This frames the translator's work as subjective, especially when they do not know what the original author wanted to express and share with their work. Therefore, the translation reflects mostly the assumptions of the translator's idea of the author's intentions. It can be that someone else's viewpoint is completely different than the translators, or that the author had a completely different intention, which leads to different possible translations. The best approach for any translation is to work closely with the original author to ensure the correct intentions and to understand the context of the work. In this case, we cannot ask the author, since he has already passed away, but a possible intention of the work was concluded by researching and understanding the times and the original author's life, to gather possible insights of his intentions and the circumstances surrounding the poem's creation. Nonetheless, the translator decides what can and should be "transferred" to the target medium. Already in the studied translations, a variation of the message exists, it can be very interpretative and adaptational in comparison to the original, on the other hand, it can be very close to the content with little room for interpretation, however, this can make the translation more literal and further from the original meaning.

The challenge for the "common" translator is to be faithful to the original text but also to retain the meaning. On the other hand, the intersemiotic translator needs to find the line between interpretation and translation in their work as well. It can be discussed further to what extent translation is interpretation, especially when talking about intersemiotic translation. For example, during my research I encountered different terms for intersemiotic translation such as transposition (Jakobson, 1959), transmutation, and adaption (Eco, 2000) but to define and discuss an exact meaning of what an intersemiotic translator is doing is out of the scope of this work. However, this work understands intersemiotic translation as its own reflection and impression of the source and tries to convey this message into another medium. The result is based on the original text and can vary from being very close to the original content but also very distant to it, in particular when it

tries to focus more on transferring the intentions or meaning, which depend on the translators' interpretation and vision of the original text. Hence, the translation is not objective as it should be but is certainly subjective. Moreover, the intersemiotic translation is depending on the translator's skills and budget. As Gothóni's translation requires musical talent and composing skills, my translation "To be my beloved Aster" could only have been created due to my understanding of physical computing and the Isotype translation is likely to look different by someone with a background in visual design. All in all, if intersemiotic translation is depending on interpretation, it is not translation, instead it is an attempt to convey the message and information with respect to the original text or in other words an intersemiotic interpretation and reproduction.

The created and examined translations show different perspectives towards possible intersemiotic translation. Due to different semiosis, the effect on the viewer can be different. With the translation of "To my beloved Aster", the object of the poem was forming the art installation. While the Isotype translation is formed on the poem itself with the viewer as an interpretant. Because of this, "To my beloved Aster" became a translation that is more on an abstract level than the Isotype translation. Even though the perception for this art installation does not mediate the content of the poem, the audience perceives the concept and idea of the poem from an abstract level, as it conveys the aimed message of repetition (pathologist's work) and loss of meaning (as the concept of nihilism). On the contrary, the Isotypes transmits the content of the poem and the repetition towards the work and death but does not represent the idea of nihilism. Regardless of their differences, both translations have been successful, as the installation should invoke the intention of nihilism and the Isotype should reproduce the content. Based on these results the role of the medium depends on what we exactly want to translate: the content can be easier mediated by visualization, but the concept behind the content can be shared better by another medium as in this examined poem with printers or music. However, same as in translations between languages e.g. a book translation from English to German, it is beneficial to read the original, as it can be poorly translated or due to language differences the meaning cannot be exactly reproduced. The same is valid for intersemiotic translation, as they do miss entities of the original

text. Furthermore, an intersemiotic translation can help to support the meaning of the poem or make it more interesting to read.

Besides, the translations are considering semiotics as a basis as well for communicating the poem. Yet, semiotics is a large field of studies and this work is taking only the fundamentals of the studies by Pierce and Saussure into account, even though the field has been further developed and adjusted towards other theories and concepts. Other semiotic theories such as the theory of myth by Barthes could have been considered in this thesis too, but have been excluded as other theories would consider other aspects such as the social phenomena of signs, which are not the focus of this work. However, this work can be improved and changed by taking various theories and concepts of other sign systems and communication theories into account, to generalize intersemiotic translations for a target audience or use other source materials to achieve different outcomes. This means the translations can be further developed, for example, by focusing on reaching the universal audience by applying other semiotic theories and perspectives. This could lead to a more defined result for communicating translation than this work does.

## Conclusion

This thesis approaches intersemiotic translation to investigate how the change of medium can affect the translation of a poem when it is translated into a nonverbal medium. The literature review led to the conclusion that the process of translation is more than finding the equivalence but also researching and understanding intention as well as the circumstances of the work. Based on these findings the explained productions of the two translations have been created. The conducted survey for gathering the impressions of each translation has revealed that both translations could convey what they intend to, but neither of them could mediate all aspects of the original poem. Moreover, the intersemiotic process shows the difficulties in finding the equivalences of all qualities of the original poem. Besides this, the space of interpretation and the faithfulness to the source text is affecting the translation and the choice of the possible target medium. Finally, the gathered feedback for each created translation shows that both translations evoked the aimed message, but neither could gather all interpreted aspects of

the poem from the perspective of the translator/artist.

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## List of Figures

<b>Figure 01.</b> Process of Communicating based on Saussure (1966/2006)	26
<b>Figure 02.</b> Semiosis based on Pierce (as cited in Hartshorne, 1931).	27
<b>Figure 03.</b> First model of the semiosis based on the poem	32
<b>Figure 04.</b> Second model of the semiosis based on the poem	32
<b>Figure 05.</b> A medium-centered model of communication.	33
<b>Figure 06.</b> Semiosis of Gathóni's translation.	55
<b>Figure 07.</b> Test setup of the first concept	56
<b>Figure 08.</b> Creation of Kombucha	57
<b>Figure 09.</b> Set up of the electric components	60
<b>Figure 10.</b> Full art work hanging from the ceiling	61
<b>Figure 11.</b> Full art work exhibited in Lapinlahti	62
<b>Figure 12.</b> Used thermal paper hanging close to the art work	63
<b>Figure 13.</b> Close up thermal printer	64
<b>Figure 14.</b> Close up of the thermal printer from the side	65
<b>Figure 15.</b> Thermal paper of different categories after they have been loop printed	67
<b>Figure 16.</b> Semiosis of "To my beloved Aster" translation	71
<b>Figure 17.</b> Sketches for the ideation of the concept for "To my beloved Aster"	73
<b>Figure 18.</b> Experiments to darken thermal paper	74
<b>Figure 19.</b> 3D Model for the printer module to attach printers to the panel	75
<b>Figure 20.</b> Isotype translation	77
<b>Figure 21.</b> Visualization of death and birth rate	78
<b>Figure 22.</b> An example of a data visualization with Isotype principles.	79
<b>Figure 23.</b> Sketches for the Isotype translation	80
<b>Figure 24.</b> Semiosis of Isotype translation	81
<b>Figure 25.</b> Thematic Map of the answers of the Art Installation	86

<b>Figure 26.</b> Thematic Map of the answers of the Isotype Translation	86
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## List of Tables

<b>Table 01.</b> Intersemiotic Types of Translation	29
<b>Table 02.</b> Comparing elements of Gothóni's translation with the original	54
<b>Table 03.</b> Comparing elements of Bacterial Cellulose translation with the original poem	58
<b>Table 04.</b> Comparing elements of "To my beloved Aster" translation with the original poem	70
<b>Table 05.</b> Comparing elements of the Isotype translation with the original poem	81
<b>Table 06.</b> Comparison of the translation with the original poem based on the aspects of the semiotics	82
<b>Table 07.</b> Translated elements in comparison to the original	84

# Appendices



# Appendix A: Original Interview in German with Gathóni

**Meine Idee der Masterarbeit ist es Gottfried Benns Gedicht „Kleine Aster“ zu übersetzen so ähnlich wie Sie das gemacht haben. Sie haben es in Finnische übersetzt und ein Lied dazu komponiert haben.**

Ja, das sind geniale Gedichte, alle Gedichte und sind schon etwas spektakulär

**Wie kamen Sie auf Gottfried Benn?**

Als ich sie gelesen habe fand ich sie natürlich sehr interessant, weil es sind schon schreckliche Sachen und sie werden brutal dargestellt, doch gleichzeitig ist dieser Realismus interessant, weil man versteht wie ein Pathologe arbeitet. Er muss natürlich seine Fantasie und sein Interesse für das Leben durch diesen Tod gewinnen und diese Leichen sieht er als Arzt und somit nicht als etwas schreckliches oder als eine tragische Katastrophe, sondern er sieht sie mit wissenschaftlichem Interesse. Dadurch kommt diese völlig andere Einsicht zum Tod und zum Leben und deswegen habe sie komponiert und interessanterweise auch sehr romantisch und nicht tragisch und nicht dramatisch.

**Sie haben es romantisch komponiert?**

Diese riesige Spannweite zwischen dem Realismus und der Romantik, dies hat viel Aufmerksamkeit geweckt. Besonders ältere Leute sind schockiert. Allerdings kann man heutzutage auch keine Dinge machen, wie zum Beispiel das Wort „Negerbraut“. Man kann das nicht mehr sagen. Ich habe das damals nicht ändern können, da dies ja auch in Original war. Wenn dies jemand heute singt, sage ich natürlich, dass man das Wort nicht benutzen soll sondern stattdessen das Wort „Penner“, denn es hat dieselben Silbenanzahl und passt. Und deswegen versteht man auch, wieso Penner schmutzige Füße haben kann.

Das ist die Problematik man kann sowas zum Beispiel nicht im Programmheft schreiben das Wort „Negerbraut“ und deswegen wählt man was gegen diese Gedichte.

Und das ist natürlich so eine Sache, ich kann natürlich beurteilen wie diese Wahrheit damals war. Soweit ich mich richtig erinnern kann

hätte Gottfried Benn fast den Nobelpreis für Literatur bekommen hat dies allerdings nicht, denn nach dem Krieg sollte er ein Faschist gewesen sein und natürlich Nazi, aber das ist natürlich schwierig zu wissen ob es auch für ihn künstlerische Spannweite bedeutete, sodass er diesen Realismus bis zum Äußersten bringt. Dazu kann ich keine Stellung nehmen.

Ich kann eine andere Stellung nehmen zum Beispiel zu Yrjö Kilpinen, einen berühmten Komponist, der hatte sehr viele Lieder komponiert, 800 Lieder und er hat auch Waffenbrüdermärsche geschrieben, aber er war bestimmt nicht ein Nazi, in der Hinsicht dass er hätte sehen wollen, dass der Holocaust hätte stattgefunden. Er hatte großen Interesse zum Beispiel für Wagner und diese Art vom Übermensch Charakter und das hat natürlich nichts mit Politik zu tun, mit unserer geschichtlichen Politik, sondern das ist eine philosophische Idee über die Menschheit und so sehe ich es bei Kilpinen.

Und deswegen ist es sehr sehr schwierig irgendeine Stellung dazu zu nehmen wollen und ich wollte es auch offenlassen, was diese Wahrheit von der Persönlichkeit von Benn ist. Ich konzentriere mich auf das was er geschrieben hat, diese geniale Art Gedichte zu schreiben. Zum Beispiel bei „Kleine Aster“, der Bierfahrer ist natürlich voll vom Bier und das Schöne ist, dass diese Aster sein Blut und all seine Flüssigkeiten trinkt. Es ist eine zwei dimensionale Sache: er hat sich tot getrunken und die Aster trinkt von innen um zu Leben. Es ist ein Kreislauf und macht dieses Gedicht so schön. Als Benn schreibt „Trinke dich satt“ habe ich das zwei Mal gemacht. Zuerst mit einer lauten Stimme – Trinke dich Satt – und dann kommt ein Echo für den Realismus vom Bierfahrer und der anderen Dimension der Aster. Diesen Symbolismus finde ich sehr wichtig.

**Wie genau haben Sie es übersetzt in Musik? Was war der Prozess?**

Es gibt sehr viele verschiedenen Möglichkeiten. Also für mich bedeutet Text und Musik eine Einheit, wenn die irgendwie einander gefunden haben mit den Gefühlen des Komponisten dann kommt daraus eine andere Ebene. Musik ist eine Ebene der Kreativität, von der Zeit und es ist mehr konkret. Natürlich gibt es im Gedicht gibt auch verschiedene Dimensionen, da ein Gedicht ist verkürzte Prosa ist und man ein Roman darüberschreiben kann.

Doch diese Verbindung zwischen Text und Musik bringt eine neue

Sache, weil die Töne sehr viele neue Informationsmöglichkeiten zu einem Text geben. Wenn der Komponist sowas selbst gefühlt hat, sowas kann auch zufälligerweise passieren, aber besonders wenn der Komponist selbst eine Art von emotionaler Landschaft durch einen Satz findet kann es die Sinnesstimmung aussagen.

„Ein ersoffener Bierfahrer wurde auf dem Tisch gestemmt“ zum Beispiel, das ist ein Bild was man sieht und fühlt und ein ersoffener Bierfahrer hat sogar am Anfang Humor, da er wahrscheinlich in einem Bierfass gefallen ist und dann ertrunken ist. Das ist die humoristische Seite und auf dem Tisch gestemmt, dass bedeutet er hat das nicht allein geschafft, weil er so schwer und war und die Leiche mit mehreren Leuten gestemmt werden musste und dann „boom“ dann fließt ein wenig Bier weg vom Körper. Es hat eine Charakterisierung und man könnte einen Film daraus machen.

So gibt die Musik eine Art von Ebene von dem Gedicht mit Assoziationen und unterbewusste Gefühle und Empfindungen, die stattgefunden haben, so habe ich diese Kompositionen recht schnell geschrieben. Ich glaube das dauerte nur fünf Tage, ein Lied pro Tag. Komischerweise passiert es, wenn ich zu Texten komponiere, dass ich die Texte von jemanden bekommen habe, so habe ich die Texte nicht selbst gefunden, sondern meine damalige Frau hat diesen Zyklus gefunden und meinte sie mich wohl interessieren, so war es auch und ich habe sofort angefangen.

### **Möchten Sie mit der Komposition und der Übersetzung etwas für die Welt weitergeben? Oder war dies ein persönliches Projekt?**

Natürlich möchte man etwas geben und vielleicht ist es eine wichtige Sache ist das man mit solch ein Werk versucht die Zuhörer aufzuwecken mit Gedanken und Fragen und selbst Findungen durch eben solch schockierende Sachen: Warum? Wieso? Was ist das in meinen Leben? Gib es sowas wirklich? Wieso dieses romantische? Das sollen Herausforderung sein.

Und diese Musik, wenn man es ohne Text singen würde ist es wirklich romantisch. Ich habe einige Plagiate genommen von Chopin, Strauss und Mendelssohn von, kleine Charaktere von verschiedenen Komponisten und wie im Gedicht krame ich als Pathologe Sachen aus toten Komponisten raus. Es ist eine Collage von verschiedenen Realitäten im

Leben und auch irrealen. Man muss diese Gedichte mehrmals lesen und nach zwanzig Mal lesen passiert auch das was mit einem Pathologiestudenten passiert, wenn er das erste Mal die Leiche untersucht, dann stinken sie und dann gewöhnt man sich daran und dann fangen sie an diesen Körper wie ein technisches Phänomen zu sehen.

Ich kannte jemanden in der finnischen Pathologie und bin dann hingegangen, da ich das Stück geschrieben habe wollte ich es auch selbst erleben was ein Pathologiesudent erlebt. Ich trug eine weiße Jacke mit sieben bis acht anderen Studenten im pathologischen Institut. Es wurde ein 69-jähriger Polizist geöffnet, er hatte Lungenkrebs und er war schwerer Raucher, es wurde alles rausgenommen, genau wie in einer Fleischerei und dann wurden die alle Innenorgane rausgeschnitten und es ist äußerst Interessant das zu sehen und dann begreift man auch wie ein Pathologe sich daran gewöhnt. Jedes Mal, wenn ein Pathologe da was findet dann ist dies eine interessante Sache. Das ist seine Arbeit, zu sehen was mit dem mechanischen Körper, mit der genialen Komposition von Materie, was einst lebendig gewesen war, zu sehen was drinnen passiert ist und warum es nicht mehr funktioniert. Das ist absolut unglaublich ich habe große Hochachtung vor allen Pathologen, die diese Seite vom Leben lernen, dass ist genauso wichtig wie wir hier sind. Ich glaube, dass wir sicherlich eine Seele haben. Wir sind mechanische Leute die durch Seele gesteuert, nachdem wir gestorben sind bleibt der Rest da und alles andere verschwindet.

Und auch diese goldene Blume ist auch ein Symbol und etwas ganz Kleines ist im Körper drin. Man könnte sagen er hätte eventuell die Seele symbolisiert mit dieser goldenen Blume. Diese Blume ist normalerweise nicht was man etwas sieht, aber jemand hat es dort hingebracht und alles andere verschwindet nur nicht das Wichtigste.

Das ist ein religiöses Gedicht gleichzeitig mit dem Humor.

Ich glaube nicht, dass viele diese Ansicht genauso sehen

Deswegen muss ein Komponist unglaublich viel gelesen haben, um diese Gedichte zu verstehen, um sich dem Gedicht zu öffnen und für diese Möglichkeiten und für die Welt der Gedichte man muss es verschiedene Tiefen und Ebenen sehen.

### **Beeinfluss Literatur und Philosophie sehr?**

Literatur gehört sehr zusammen mit der Musik, wir informieren die ganze Zeit etwas über die Menschheit über die geheimnisvolle und

verborgene Wahrheit über uns, in allen Arten und wir berühren die Dinge wofür es keine Wörter gibt, fähig die Empfindungen und Kontakte zu finden und zu übersetzen mit Tönen und Wörtern und das schönste für mich ist dieser Zusammenhang zwischen dem Wörtern und der Musik deswegen dieses Lied. Text und Musik bilden eine Einheit wie ein Pianist und Sänger.

#### **Wie denken Sie über Übersetzungen in andere Medien?**

Benns Gedichte könnte man natürlich verfilmen, aber sowas gibt es hoffentlich nicht, denn das wäre nicht Sinn der Sache, da man es zu viel mit dem Visuellen in Verbindung setzten würde statt dem Inneren. Das ist ein Grund, warum Herman Hesse in seinem Testament geschrieben hat, dass seine Romane nicht auf die Bühne gebracht werden dürfen.

#### **Wenn Sie jetzt die Gedichte nochmal übersetzten würden würde dies genau so klingen?**

Ne, bestimmt nicht keine Ahnung was es sein könnte aber bestimmt nicht diese Art, das war damals 1978 als ich es geschrieben habe. Damals war es eine bewusste Entscheidung zwei verschiedene Charakter zusammenbringen die dennoch so weit entfernt sind. Realismus und Romantik, was für ein Charakter diese Verbindung bringen kann.

#### **Nachdem ich die Stücke anhören konnte sind mir aufgefallen das einige Wörter länger gesungen wurden, weshalb die Frage aufkam warum im Gesang manchmal lange Töne gibt?**

Musik funktioniert in der Zeit und es gibt Spannungen kommend von den inneren Empfindungen und sind wichtiger, welche man mit längeren Tönen zeigen kann als mit kürzen Tönen. Das ist eine Mischung von Bedeutung. Es gibt wenig Information zum Beispiel in Popmusik (Popmusik wird im Hintergrund gespielt während des Interviews) es ist nur „shak-shak-shak“ und es ist alles gesagt während in der klassischen Musik mit Veränderung und Energien arbeitet. Eine Melodie bedeutet eine innere Empfindung von der psychischen Ganzheit des Menschen wie beim Ein- und Ausatmen wird reflektiert in den mit langen und kürzen Tönen. Diese Länge gibt Information, wenn man diese versteht was gesagt wird und dann ist die Schwierigkeit dies zu für Musiker.

#### **Wie war die Reaktion zu ihrem Stücken?**

Viele Leute waren natürlich schockiert und haben gefragt, warum ich sowas gemacht habe. Einmal wurde es in Hamburger Musikhochschule aufgeführt, ich war dort Professor und gab zwei Schüler von mir ein Sopranist und ein Pianist diese Stücke für einen Abend, ich dachte es wäre ein Studentenabend und hörte später das es ein riesiger Skandal gab, denn es war ein Abend für die Sponsoren der Hochschule und da waren lauter alter Frauen um die 70 und die haben dort gegessen und zugehört.

Um ehrlich zu sein und etwas makaber zu sein, wenn man mit 70 Jahren nicht klar geworden, dass das Leben mit dem Tod endet dann hat man was Wichtiges das ganze Leben was vergessen. Das Leben ist nur da zu lernen zu sterben, das übt man. Das bedeutet nicht das man jeden Tag an den Tod denken, sondern man soll, sondern vom Leben lernen soll, dies ist eine Schulung und nach der Abschlussprüfung wird man frei von hier.

Es gibt viele Möglichkeiten das zu verstehen.

## **Appendix B: Poem's translations with marked word classes**

The art installation uses the sturcutre of subject, predicate, object and adverbials. Everytime the installation is restarted it changes is language into English, Finnish or German. Here the poem's clauses can be seen. Special thanks for Stephan Schulz for the help to find the correct part of the sentence in each language.

Blue = Subject,  
Red = Predicate,  
Object (direct and indirect),  
Yellow = Adverbials

### Kleine Aster

Ein ersoffener Bierfahrer wurde auf den Tisch gestemmt.  
Irgendeiner hatte ihm eine dunkelhellila Aster  
zwischen die Zähne geklemmt.  
Als ich von der Brust aus  
unter der Haut mit einem langen Messer  
Zunge und Gaumen herausschnitt,  
muß ich sie angestoßen haben, denn sie glitt  
in das nebenliegende Gehirn.  
Ich packte sie ihm in die Brusthöhle  
zwischen die Holzwolle,  
als man zunähte.  
Trinke dich satt in deiner Vase!  
Ruhe sanft,  
kleine Aster!

(Source Benn, G. (1912). Kleine Aster. In J.P. Wallmann (Ed.), Gottfried Benn  
(p.15). Location: Stieglitz-Verlag)

### Pikku Asteri

Hukkunut kaljakuski rahdattiin pöydälle.  
Joku, kuka lie, oli tunkenut  
tummankirkkaanliilan asterin  
hänen hampaidensa väliin.  
Irrottaessani pitkällä veitsellä  
rinnasta käsin ihon alta  
kieltä sekä kitalakea  
lienen tönäissyt kukkaa,  
sillä se liukui viereisiin aivoihin.  
Sijasin sen rintaonteloon  
lastuvillan sekaan  
kun kiinni ommeltiin.  
Juo kylliksesi maijakossasi!  
Uinu rauhassa, pikku asteri!

(Source: Ralf Gothóni (1978). Morgue. Fennica Gehrman.)

### Little Aster

A drowned beer-hauler was heaved onto the slab.  
Someone had wedged a lavender aster  
between his teeth.  
As I reached through the chest  
under the skin  
with a long knife  
to cut out the tongue and palate  
I must have bumped the flower, for it slid  
into the brain lying alongside.  
I packed it into the chest cavity  
with the sawdust as we sewed up.  
Drink your fill in that vase!  
Rest in peace, little aster!

(Translation retrieved from Superver, (2020, May 18). Gottfried Benn Elec-  
tronic Library. Superver. <https://superver.com/elibrary/gottfried-benn/>)

# Appendix C: Survey

## Screenshots of the questionnaire

Isotype's questionnaire

## Translation feedback: Information Graphics

Hello!

I am working currently on my master thesis which tries to investigate how intersemiotic translation is affected based on the choice of medium. Therefore I have created translations of a poem to other media. One of them I would like to introduce to you and would like to know your impression of it. The whole survey only contains two questions and won't take more than 10 minutes to answer.

Thank you for your participation!

\* **Erforderlich**

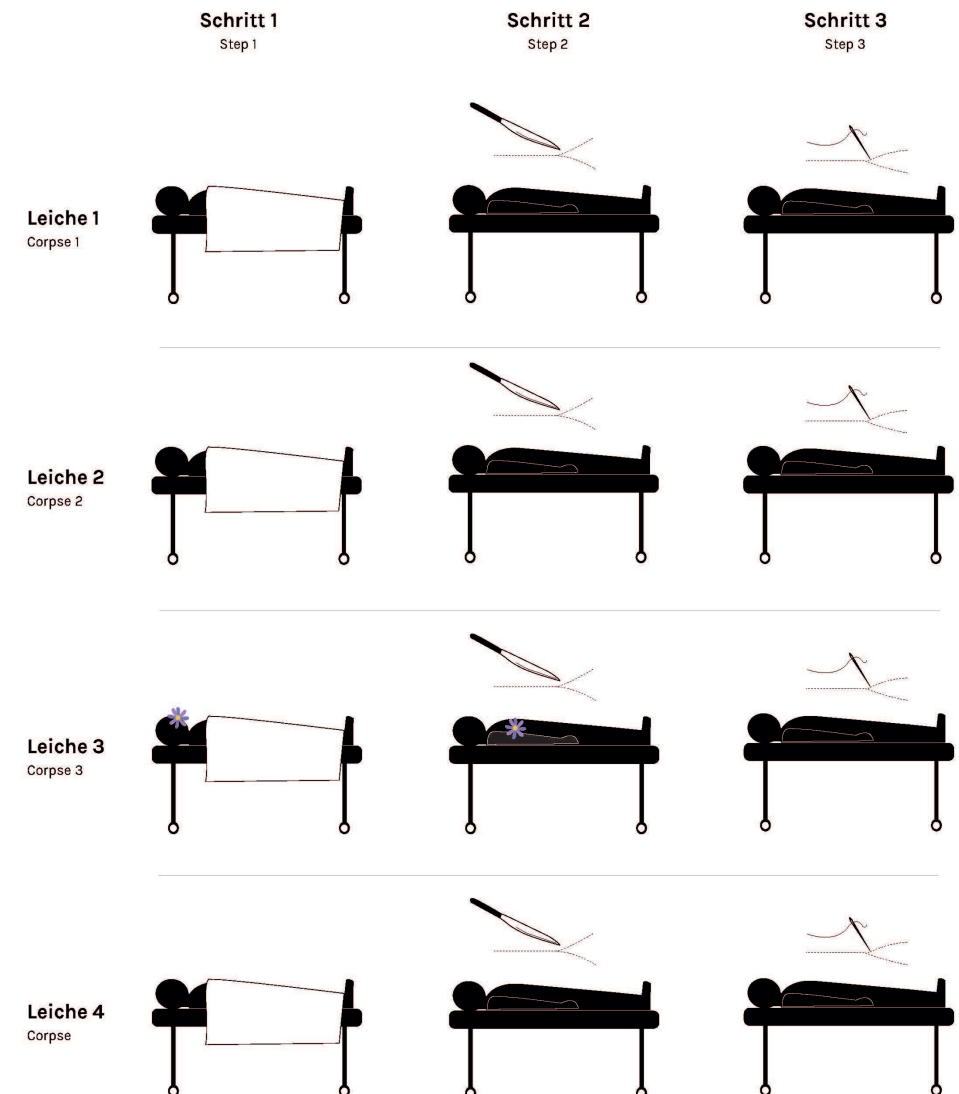
Translation

Please take a look at the information graphic which is a translation of a poem and answer the question down below.  
For better quality of the graphics open: [www.thuthuthu.com/KA.pdf](http://www.thuthuthu.com/KA.pdf)

Information Graphic:

### Täglicher Prozess eines Pathologen um 1912

Daily process of a pathologist around 1912



Quelle/Source: Gottfried Benn - Kleine Aster

1. If the graphic tells a story what story do you think is it telling? \*

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---

2. What are you emotions, thoughts and associations when seeing this visualization? \*

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3. Any other comments?

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Dieser Inhalt wurde nicht von Google erstellt und wird von Google auch nicht unterstützt.

Google Formulare

To my beloved Asters's questionnaire

## Translation feedback: Art Installation

Hello!

I am working currently on my master thesis which tries to investigate how intersemiotic translation is affected based on the choice of medium. Therefore I have created translations of a poem to other media. One of them I would like to introduce to you and would like to know your impression of it. The whole survey only contains two questions and won't take more than 10 minutes to answer.

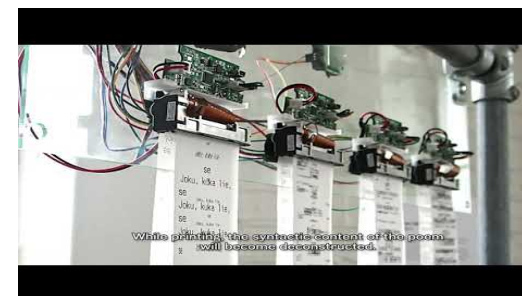
Thank you for your participation!

\* **Erforderlich**

Translation:  
Art  
installation

This translation is an art installation. Please take a look at its documentation and share you impression by answering the questions below!

Please watch the video to get an impression about the art installation and take a look at the photos for more details before answering the questions. Watch here for better solution: <https://youtu.be/WasniZF4--A>



<http://youtube.com/watch?v=WasniZF4--A>

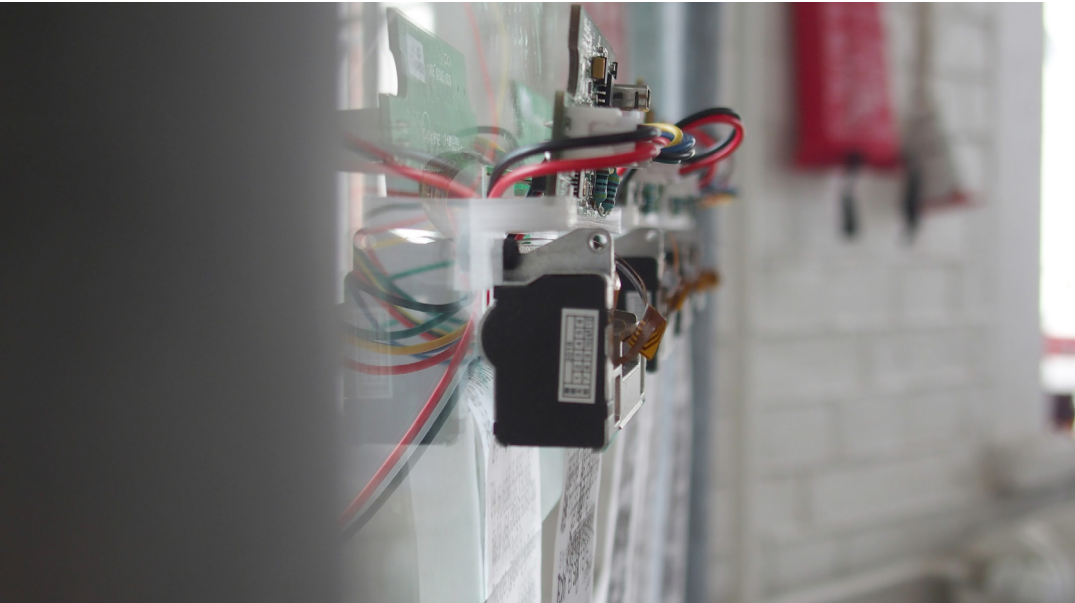
A







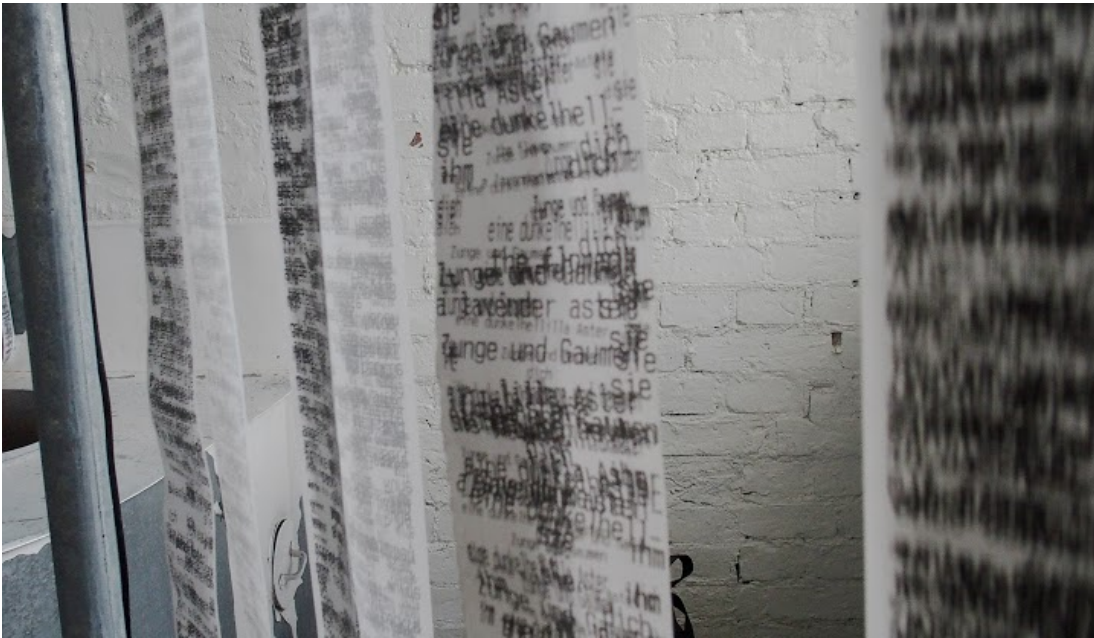
Close Up Thermal Printer Side



Printed paper after several days



Paper Close Up



1. If the art installation tells a story what story do you think is it telling? \*

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---

2. What are you emotions, thoughts and associations when seeing this art installation? \*

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3. Any other comments?

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Google Formulare

## Answers of survey Translation Information Graphic (Isotype) with themes

“Which story is communicated bases on the fact the idea is to communicate the routine of the pathologist? If the graphic tells a story what story do you think is it telling?”

Answers
That a pathologist in the 1912 dissected and sewed up four corpses a day, and that the third corpse had a flower in their head (brain? eye?), and in their chest (heart?). The pathologist removed these before sewing the corpse up again.
Something is taken away from the third corpse (the flower). Maybe the third corpse is an alive person who is murdered? Or is it a ceasarean section?
I really can't see any story in the picture
It looks as though the pathologist cut open and sewed back closed four corpses every day. For some reason, he or she put a flower inside corpse 3?
It is telling a story of how a pathologist repeatedly opens and closes corpses. The meaning of the flower moved from the face of one to the armpit is difficult to understand, it might mean that even though some corpses are different, they stiöö get the same procedure.
That everyday people are dying and nevertheless the pathologist does the same thing because it's his job.
Hide something in a body, see in people's bodies
Hmm. Don't see so much as a story but more of an infographic showing some pathologist routines form 1912. Can't figure out if there's a story.
Every dead was the same
No story? Someone who has a flower-like thingie has also died?
I didn't get clear understanding. But it came to my mind that the job of a pathologist in 1912 is quite repetitive. And it seems that the pathologist took something away from the third corpse.
Pathologists operations seem to be quite similar regardless of the corpses.
It shows how a pathologist deals with the corpses he has to examine. But there is something special about corpse 3,indicates by the purple flower.
Difficult to say? That every corpse is the same, except one out of four..?
Routine of inspecting a dead body

Answers
No matter who we are in the world, it will be the same after death.
The infographic tells a story of repetition, the story of which, however, not being the whole truth. As it happens, a whole truth is hard to come by in an infographic, requiring perhaps a more verbose approach, to say the least. The infographic, however, hints at a whole truth of the human condition. Of a condition that even if mostly consisting of repetition (and crowning by death), is intermingled with occasions of clarity, beauty, and meaning. Of a meaning found within the configurations of a cadaver, or beauty amidst the duller daily routine of slicing up (and sewing in) inanimate flesh. That is the story the infographic is hinting at.

What are your emotions, thoughts and associations when seeing this visualization?

Answers
While the visualization is somewhat simplistic and almost crude, it is also effective. I'm intrigued by the third corpse, and I'm intrigued by the symbolism present in the flower. I feel a sort of morbid fascination and sadness, one that is always present in discussions about death.
Confused, but interested to read the poem in question!
The picture left me quite indifferent. It looks more like a manual for surgeons.
Confusion. I'd think nothing of it if it wasn't for the flower in the third corpse.
Old things, especially old hospital equipment/instruments give me the creeps. This, not so much, but there is this slight feeling of unease when thinking about opening and closing corpses, and medicine in the 1910s. The human figures are nice, more life-like ones might make this more unnerving. All in all, the simplicity and the repeatedness of the process makes it seem mundane, removing anxiousness around the topic. The simplicity is also funny, sort of, opening and closing one corpse after another.
The flower confuses me.
Emotions etc. that come by when looking at the infographic are: elation, sadness, frailty, and doom.
Confusing, difficult first to catch what was the difference. The last corpse was missing the number, ie "Corpse", not "Corpse 4".
Recently I have listened to some folk poetry with repetitive phrases and those came to my mind.

Answers
The visualization did not arouse much emotions, thoughts or associations.
The visualization seems like a manual depicting the strict processes which a pathologist has to follow in his daily work. To me this manual seems free of emotion, except for the 3. Corpse. There is something special with this one (because of this flower thing) but I can't tell what it is. Maybe the pathologist had a special relationship to this one?
It looks weird, but surprisingly familiar from crime movies
After people died, body become a object without soul.

Any other comments?

Answers
The graphic made me rather curious to read the original poem. If that was its intention, then it definitely succeeded.
I must know what the flower is about!! 😊
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDgagjn9-_g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDgagjn9-_g</a>
Probably I could not understand the poem from this visualization.
What is the flower supposed to mean? Can I read the original poem?
I can't even guess where you are going with this
the flower?



## Answers of survey Translation Art installation (To my beloved Aster)

“Which story is communicated bases on the fact the idea is to communicate the routine of the pathologist? If the graphic tells a story what story do you think is it telling?”

Answers
Over time, anything valuable will be covered with unrelated mumbo-jumbo.
A story about life
Evolution of Human, Society of today
Every printed paper tells the story of the life of a person and the more black is, the more things people have done during their life
how many times the poem have been read
Somebody drowned
I think about how technology distorts messages, how systematization and organisation can create a loss off meaning, and a sense of emptiness.
I think it would be something about repetition or a routine (since the printers go around). In the process something is lost (since the texts become more and more unreadable). Since the name is "To my beloved Aster" it would be a personal story.
The never ending flow of information. How new information overwrite old information and that too much information can cause problems when trying to make some use of it.
That our language differs very much between countries. Our words can have very different width.
Maybe it wants to show that not the words are the most important thing about a poem, because we see the words of the poem now, but still have no idea what it is all about.
My first thought was 'the infinite monkey theorem' computeritized, but then I started to see this as a way to turn a poem into graphical form. A transversion from one art form to another.
That poems are continuing to be written. That it never ends. And that they will be there for ever. It's the same as with people. We are unique, one by one. And new people will come. And this will just continue. And we all are connected to each other.

Answers
A story about the patterns that emerge in the daily conversations of a certain human being, with the patterns being grouped by the separations of the printers (subject, predicate, object, adjective). Every human speaks every message in a different manner (which can be represented by the poem in this example) and the patterns that emerge are displayed by the printed results.
The more often a poem is recited, the more it fades to insignificance.
It tells the story of a machine with some level of intelligence, which/who is trying to understand, analyse and deduce human poetry.
It is a story about possibilities and parallel realities
Maybe it is telling us to stop now and then and take a step back to view what you have become, or look at where you are at this moment. If it looks like your life goes on repeat - change your course (?) while you can so you don't look back and all you see is a mess of a life you just rushed through..
A biography about someone.
That art is like a recycled CVS receipt.
It reminds me of something like... if one separates a story or a message into its parts, repeating it and (over)analysing it for too long, it makes the actual point of message get lost, sort of drown in itself. People can repeat information they hear endlessly, but like these machines, it's possible that they never truly understand the essence of what is being said, focusing on parts instead of the whole. Also, this makes me think of history and passing of time, for some reason. That art and literature made by past generations are widely consumed today, but probably understood very differently than during the time they originated in.
That even if you try to preserve memory by repeatedly telling it to someone, over time it becomes distorted and can never be fully preserved in its original state.
The first thing I thought about was time. Time goes so fast and in routine one story is become overridden by another. Like these printers override the poem again and again.
life is meaningless

What are your emotions, thoughts and associations when seeing this art installation?

Answers
Interesting, creative. I wonder if being an artist is worth it.
Curiosity about something new and creative

Answers
Development, Pay Desk, Confusion
I associate it with an hospital that tracks the people who enters in every area or the list of people who died of co-vid 19 in every country. I feel a sense of loss and monotony.
people read a poem with different opinions and thought in mind, though out time goes by, it might be explained in a thousand ways with thousand of interpretations. The original meaning with different people's thought blends together to a complex and hard to understand content in different person's minds.
I think it's inspiring, innovative, interesting
It feels like a quite dystopian fragment of technological advancement, but maybe even more than the technology in itself, the structures and bureaucracy sometimes related. And the taking of orders mindlessly which can lead to things unimaginable. I also think about chaos, and disintegration.
My first impression was that I liked the construct with the bare bones printers, there is some novelty to this idea. I see the seperation into different word classes as more of an stylistic choice than one with influence on the story it tells (/or I just don't see the connection).
The sound from the printers is almost a beat for technomusic. The prints have some cool patterns.
I am partly concerned about the use of resourses (ink and paper). Otherwise the different ways a language can be built.
I am wondering why the Adverbial sheet is all black, because I would have thought the other parts of a sentence are used more often. Maybe the poem does not contain a lot of full sentences, but wants to create associations and emotions by using a lot of standing alone Adverbials and Objects. Honestly, I rather feel sad and confused seeing this art installation. I get the feeling that it wants to show what is important by showing how to do it wrong. I have a lot of questions now, for example: What is the original poem about? Which languages are printed on the sheets of paper? Is the poem that was used for the art isntallation even important or can it be replaced by any other poem? What exactly does the art installation work? Is the topic of the master thesis rather art or linguistics? Are the words printed at the place where they were standing in the original poem or is the position random? I think it is complicated to teach the computer how to differentiate between the different parts of a sentence, so I guess the artist gave the correct parts of the poem to the printers.
I started to think if creating structured poems from random words would be possible. At least it might turn out better than some hit lyrics - but then I also though if you could reconstruct the original words from fully written papers.

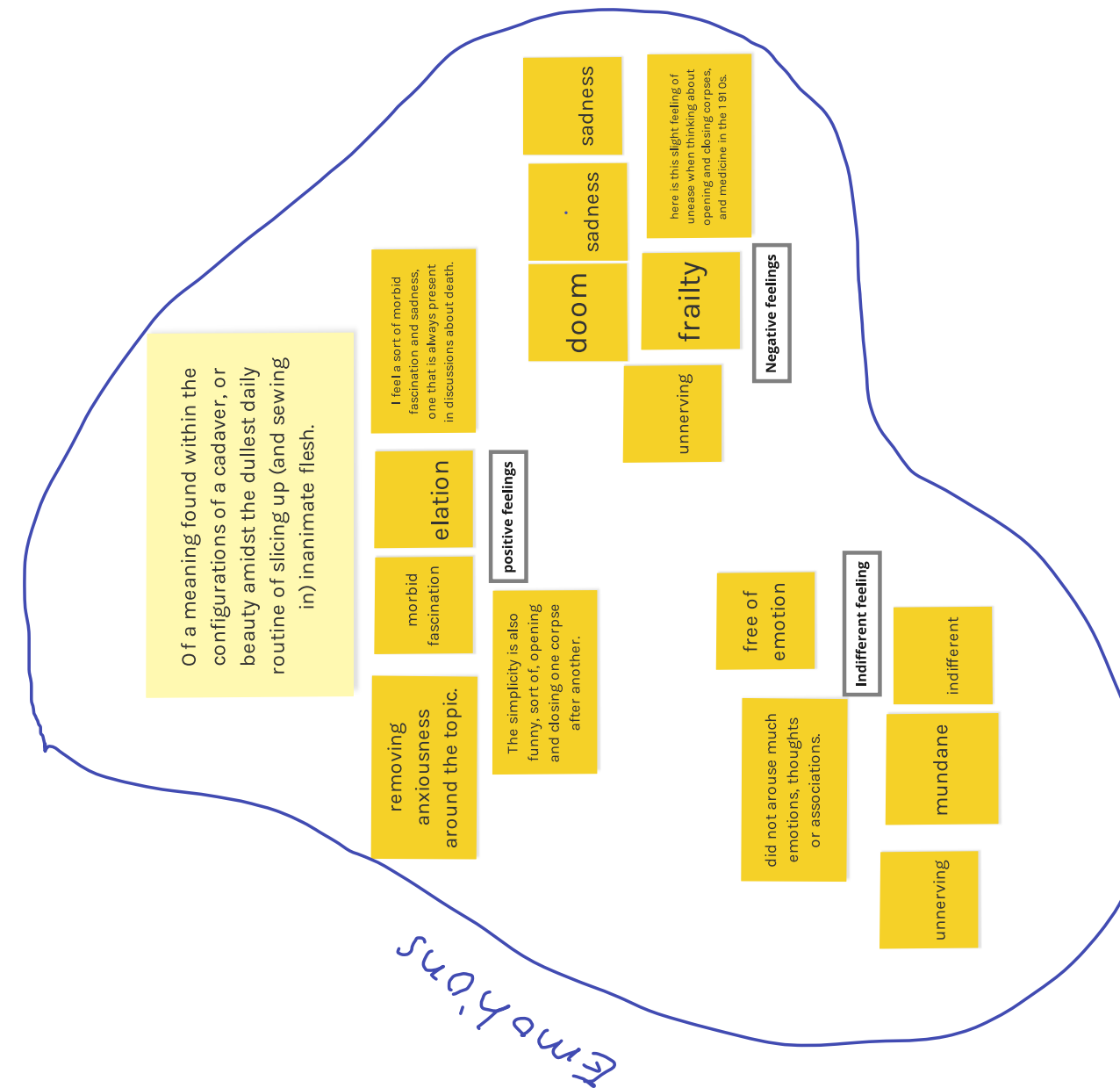
Answers
I liked the printers movement. And I think the print was more and more beautiful. I felt happiness looking at them. I associated to machines working, but here with something soft like people's feelings and thoughts-the poems. And the machines made them beautiful in new way.
There is certain calmness to the way that the printers operate in a steady rhythm. It sounds like music in a way which each printer having a different pitch. In general, I associate the results with the personas of other human beings, in the way that they talk and act, as described above.
The sound of the printers seams to tear the poem in parts; the whole setup is a little irritating
Some kind of morbid fascination. Also, the visual contrast of the only color being the electrical parts of the printers gives it a rather interesting touch.
I thought it was a very clever way of visualising machine processes which have human atributes. I felt sad imagining the paper being over-used, as the human wouldn't be able to read it but I experienced beauty non the less.
Confused. Stressed over the printing and then stressed over what my life looks like and what I can do with it.
I'm pretty confused.
I want to know about the poetry that's gone through the wringer. This installation looks more like the destruction of poetry. My emotion is sadness.
It makes me feel a sad type of beauty, maybe longing. The piece somehow reminds me of not getting your message heard and missing a real connection. Somehow the mechanical look is a bit nostalgic to me, it brings in mind the pre-digital era. Then again the scattered texts on the paper also remind me of coding and the fragmented nature of the internet. The machines relentlessly processing the poem also made me think of AI producing or consuming art, and on the other hand how in the industry of today, creative workers (and other workers too) are required to act like machines, working and staying productive without stopping to enjoy or think about the work itself.
History, Distortion, Futility
wow, very modern. The paper is us and the printer is the world that writes a story of our lives.
this doesn't make any sense, is this some kind of modern art

Any other comments?

Answers
The video does not allow full-screen mode. The text is just barely readable in such a small size.
I know that the answer may not be related to your work, but my mind works in a very strange way ;)
I don't know anything about the poem that is printed there.
An interesting way to present a poem.
I love the artwork. Is it Thu's creation? <3
This seems to be more of an exercise of "what if I take a poem, separate it into four grammar parts, and print it over & over on thermal paper?" Imagination is good, but take it to the next level.
These were my subjective thoughts, hope it's not too much, this work actually made me think and feel a lot! It's beautiful, thank you!
It would be nice to see what we get if every circle will start with our different color. Will it be black at the end?
still more meaningful than Donald Trumps presidency

## Grouped themes

Coded and categorized themes based on the answers of the Isotype survey



# Flower

## Curiosity of flower

I must know  
what the flower  
is about!! 😊

I'm intrigued by the  
symbolism present  
in the flower.

What is the flower  
supposed to mean?  
Can I read the original  
poem?

Something is taken  
away from the third  
corpse (the flower).

The meaning of the  
flower moved from the  
face of one to the armpit  
is difficult to understand.

Someone who has a  
flower-like thingie  
has also died?

## Interaction with flower

## Special of flower

But there is something  
special about corpse  
3, indicates by the  
purple flower.

There is something special with  
this one (because of this flower  
thing) but I can't tell what it is.  
Maybe the pathologist had a  
special relationship to this one?

Something is taken  
away from the third  
corpse (the flower).

## Confusion with flower

The flower  
confuses me

# Pathologist work

## Interaction of third corpse

Maybe the third corpse  
is an alive person who  
is murdered? Or is it a  
caesarean section?

And it seems that the  
pathologist took  
something away from  
the third corpse.

Hide something  
in a body, see in  
people's bodies

Of a meaning found within the  
contortions of a cadaver, or  
beauty amidst the dulled daily  
routine of slicing up (and sewing  
in) inanimate flesh.

The pathologist  
removed these before  
sewing the corpse up  
again.

Pathologists  
operations seem to be  
quite similar regardless  
of the corpses.

Routine of  
inspecting a  
dead body

the pathologist  
does the same thing  
because it's his job.

That a pathologist in  
the 1912 dissected and  
sewed up four corpses  
a day

It shows how a  
pathologist deals with  
the corpses he has to  
examine.

It is telling a story of  
how a pathologist  
repeatedly opens and  
closes corpses.

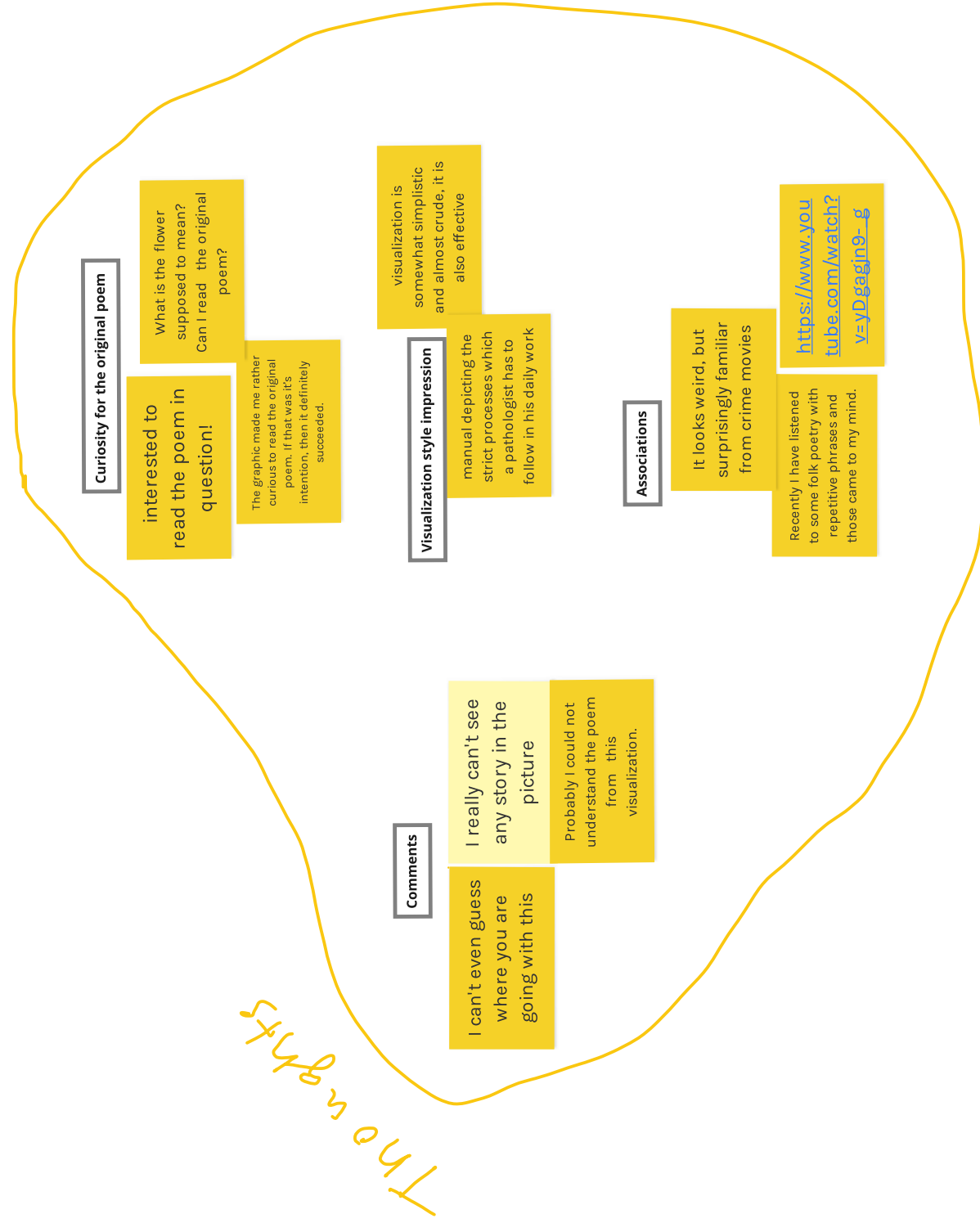
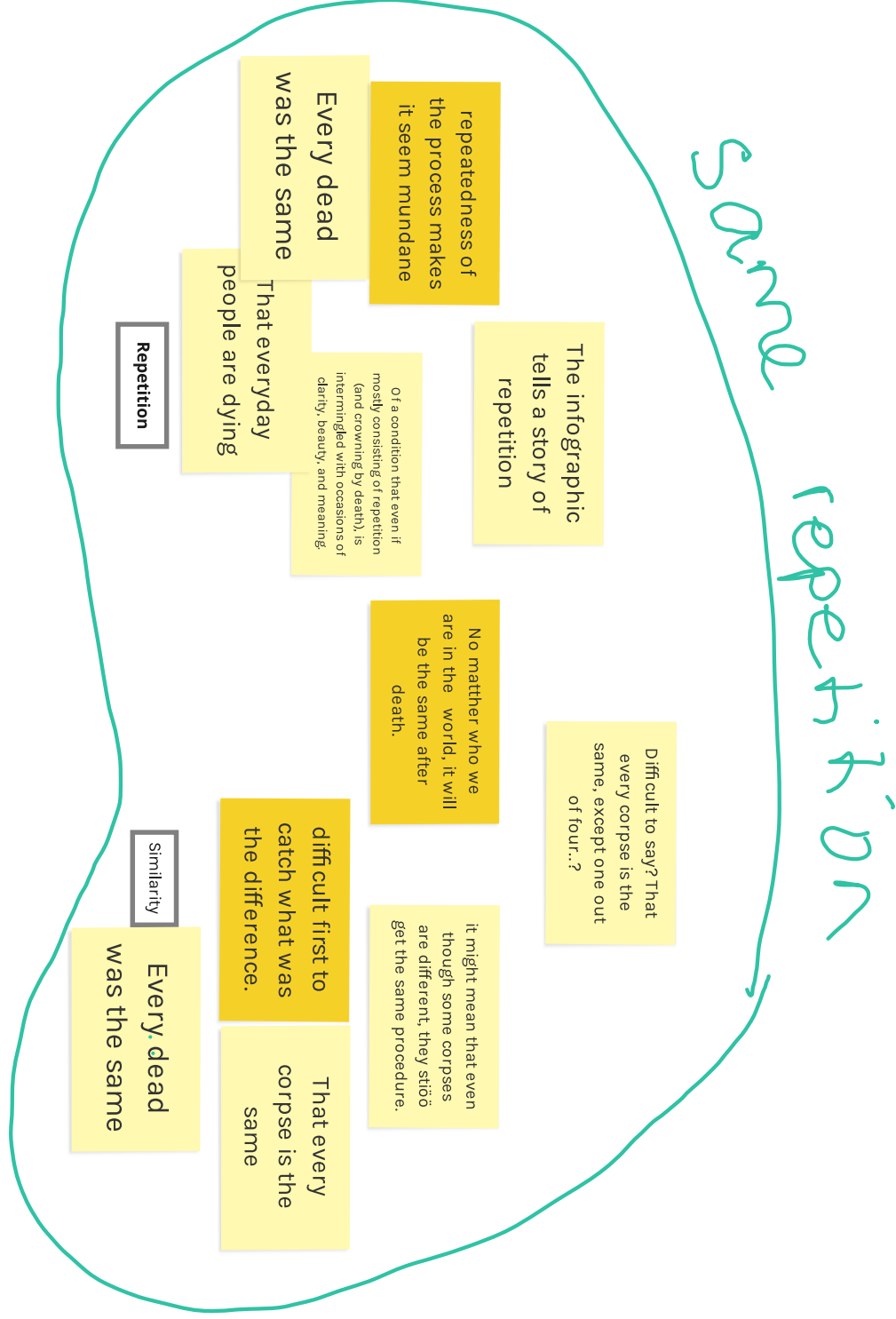
it came to my mind  
that the job of a  
pathologist in 1912 is  
quite repetitive.

## Routine of pathologist

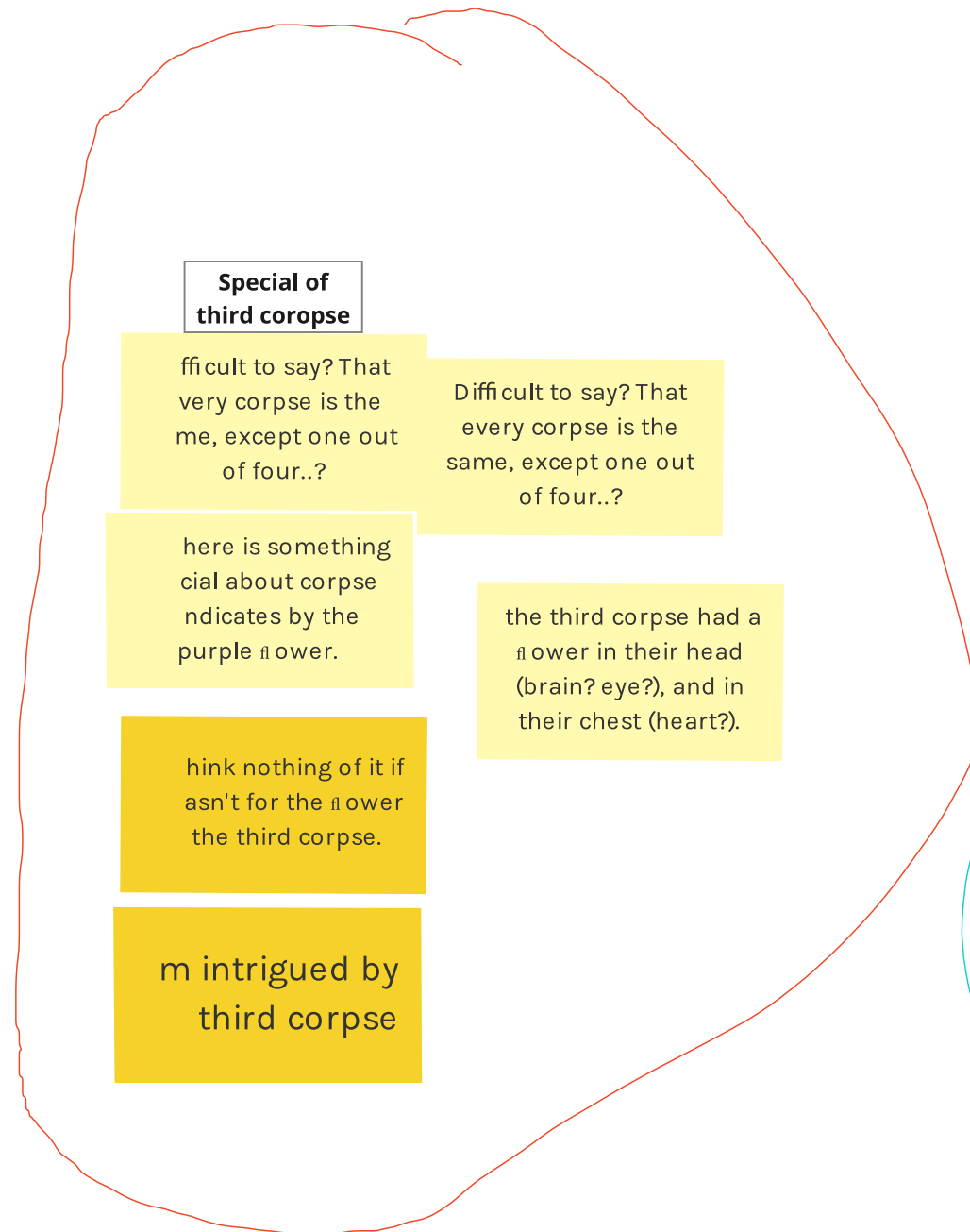
pathologist does  
the same thing  
because it's his job.

some pathologist  
routines form  
1912



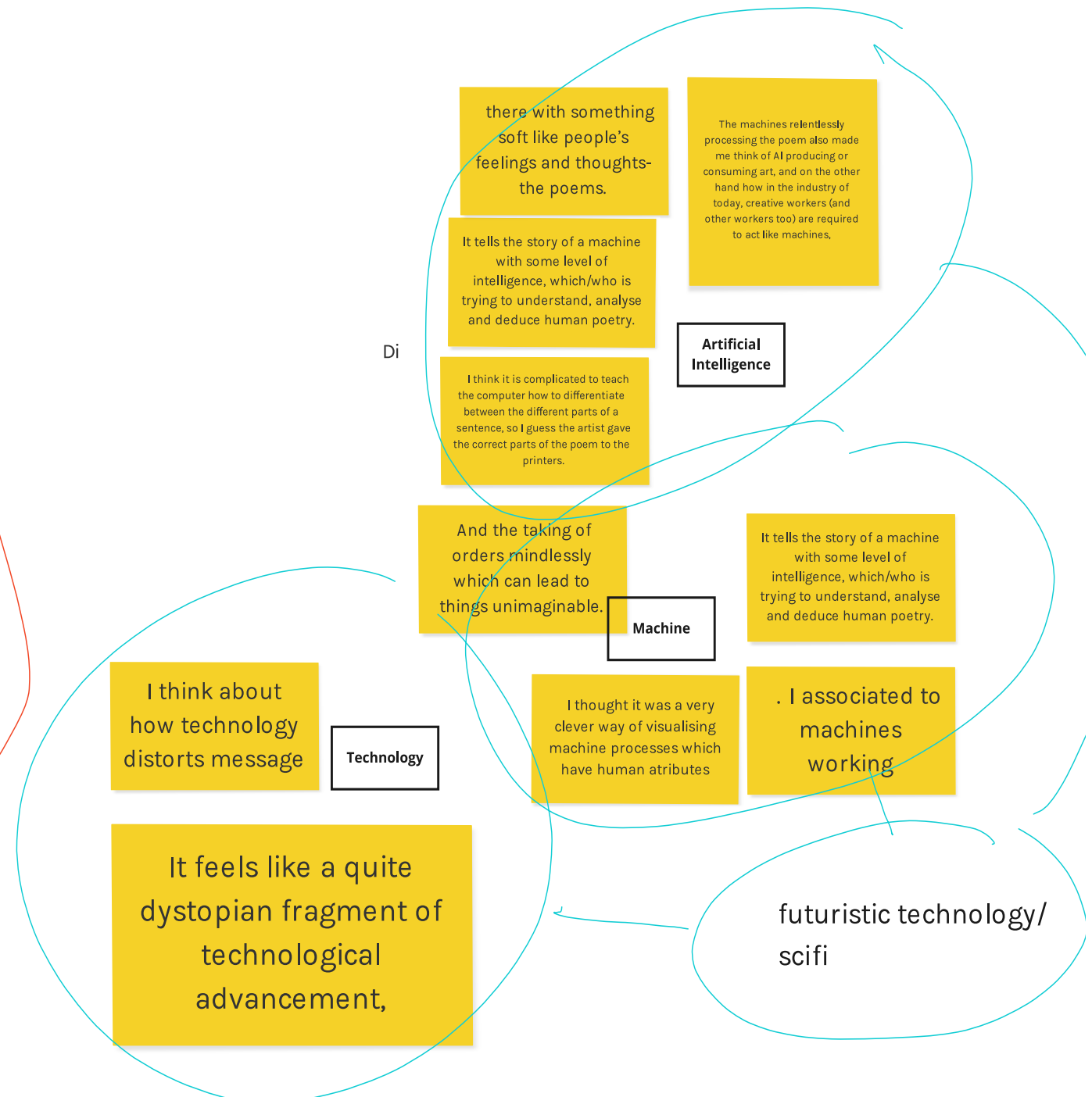


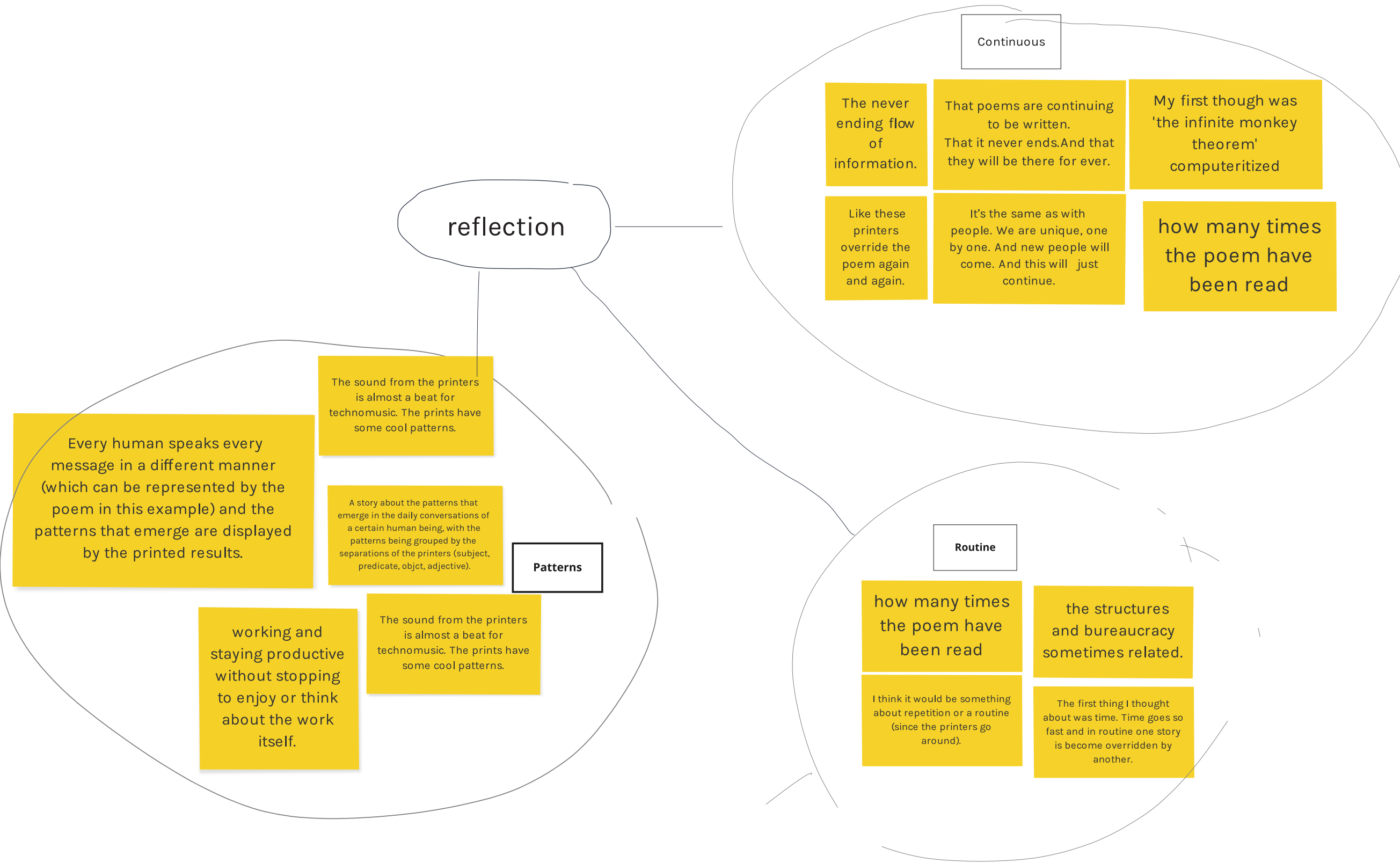
3rd corpse



## Grouped themes

Coded and categorized themes based on the answers of the survey  
"To my beloved Aster"





**Sadness**

I feel a sense  
of loss and  
monotony.

A sense of  
emptiness.

I felt sad imagining the  
paper being overused, as  
the human wouldn't be  
able to read it

Honestly, I rather feel  
sad and confused  
seeing this art  
installation

It makes me feel a  
sad type of beauty,  
maybe longing.

**Neutral  
emotions**

morbid  
fascination

certain  
calmness

**Happy**

I felt happiness  
looking at them.

**beauty**

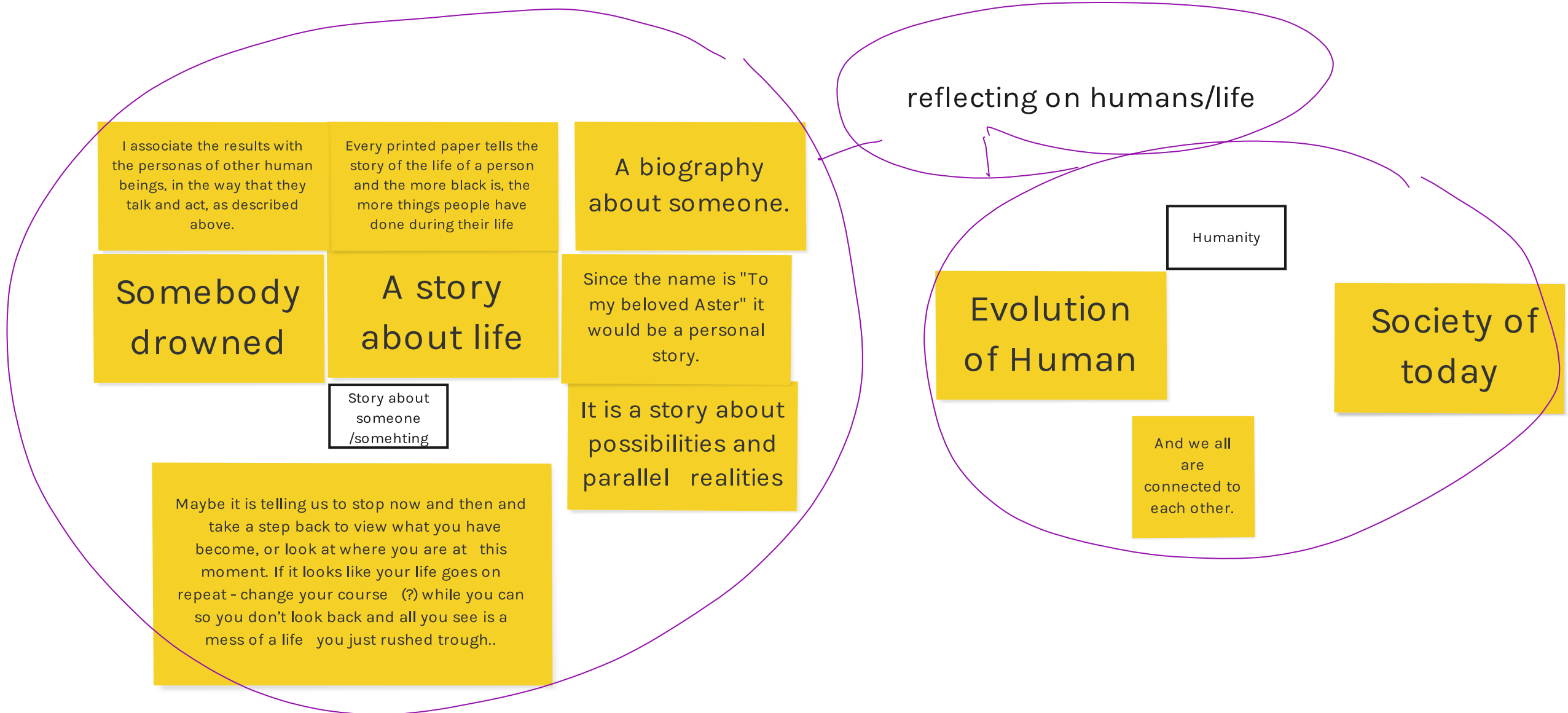
experienced  
beauty non the  
less

And the machines  
made them beautiful  
in new way.

high regard

emotions





losing meaning

How new information overwrite old information and that too much information can cause problems when trying to make some use of it.

That even if you try to preserve memory by repeatedly telling it to someone, over time it becomes distorted and can never be fully preserved in its original state.

Lost of meaning

In the process something is lost (since the texts become more and more unreadable).

The more often a poem is recited, the more it fades to insignificance.

It reminds me of something like... if one separates a story or a message into its parts, repeating it and (over)analysing it for too long, it makes the actual point of message get lost, sort of drown in itself.

people read a poem with different opinions and thought in mind, though out time goes by, it might be explained in a thousand ways with thousand of interpretations. The original meaning with different people's thought blends together to a complex and hard to understand content in different person's minds.

People can repeat information they hear endlessly, but like these machines, it's possible that they never truly understand the essence of what is being said, focusing on parts instead of the whole. Also, this makes me think of history and passing of time, for some reason. That art and literature made by past generations are widely consumed today, but probably understood very differently than during the time they originated in.

Maybe it wants to show that not the words are the most important thing about a poem, because we see the words of the poem now, but still have no idea what it is all about.

Over time, anything valuable will be covered with unrelated mumbo-jumbo.

how systematization and organisation can create a loss off meaning

life is meaningless

The piece somehow reminds me of not getting your message heard and missing a real connection

I started to see this as a way to turn a poem into graphical form. A transversion from one art form to another.

the destruction of poetry.

Differences in language

That our language differs very much between countries. Our words can have very different width.

the different ways a language can be built.

Every human speaks every message in a different manner (which can be represented by the poem in this example) and the patterns that emerge are displayed by the printed results.

That our language differs very much between countries. Our words can have very different width.

A story about the patterns that emerge in the daily conversations of a certain human being, with the patterns being grouped by the separations of the printers (subject, predicate, object, adjective).

